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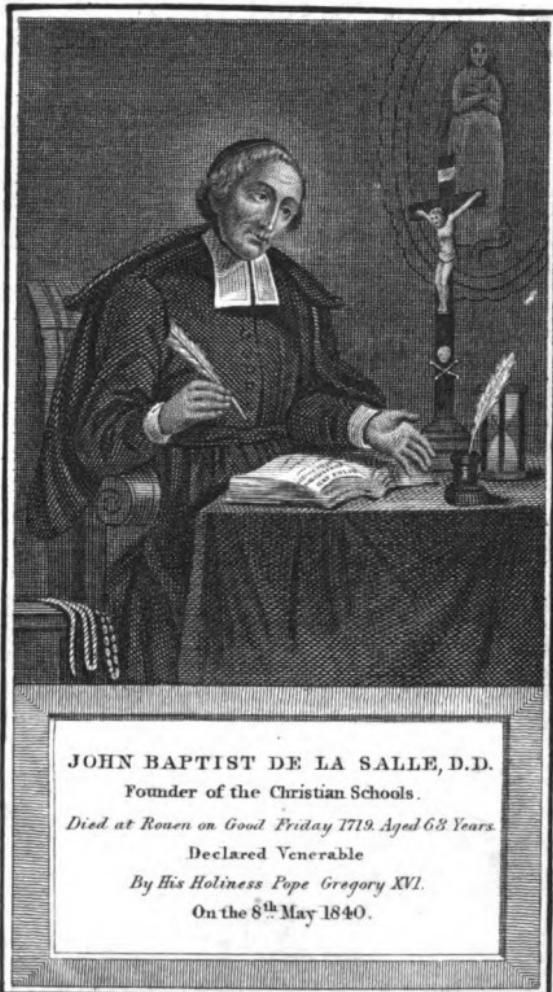
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**JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, D.D.**

Founder of the Christian Schools.

*Died at Roan on Good Friday 1719. Aged 63 Years.*

Declared Venerable

*By His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI.*

*On the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1840.*

W McDowell Sc Dublin.

THE LIFE  
OF THE  
VEN. J. B. DE LA SALLE,  
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CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS,  
WITH AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE INSTITUTE  
TO THE PRESENT TIME.

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AND ALSO AN ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE  
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## PREFACE.

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AMONG the many scenes of moral beauty unfolded to us in the Gospel, which may be said to be still glowing with the light and redolent with the odour of redeeming charity, we have been always particularly attracted by that affecting passage in the 10th chapter of St. Mark, where the little children are presented to Jesus Christ. Zealous for the reverence due to their Master's character—deeming it beneath him to stoop from the lofty and glorious objects of his divine mission to notice the group of little ones that were thronging around him—conceiving that the wisdom which issued from his lips, and which was then confounding the learning of the scribe and the pride of the pharisee, could not condescend to the simplicity and levity of childhood, the Evangelist informs us that his disciples rebuked the intrusive affection of those parents who were anxious to procure one glance of that eye of mercy, one touch of that beneficent hand for their youthful charge. They were, as yet, such novices in the knowledge and love of their divine Master, as not to reflect that such a condescension—such a compassionate sympathy with the lowly, the simple, and the unworldly, was one of the principal traits which was to adorn the character of the Messiah, and that the Prophet had long before represented him as a Shepherd so tender and devoted, as to carry the young in his bosom. How great their astonishment to hear him rebuke their short-sighted zeal, to behold him opening his arms to those little ones, pressing them to his bosom, and be-

stowing upon them the benediction which sanctified their hearts, while it caused them to melt and glow with feelings of reverence and love! But it was not only the ineffable tenderness and all-embracing care of our divine Redeemer's charity that were here revealed to them; his wisdom imparted a new light to their understanding. For, in commanding them to "suffer the little children to come to him and to forbid them not, for that of such is the kingdom of God," he reveals to them, that the unworldly simplicity which they despised in these little ones, was the very standard to which their own wisdom should be elevated, in order to render them capable of receiving the truths, practising the lessons, and afterwards receiving the rewards of the Gospel.

As may be supposed, a lesson so impressive sunk deeply into the minds of his disciples; the claims and capabilities of childhood were seen in their true light and recognised in all their importance; and afterwards, when the apostles carried the message of redemption to the ends of the earth, they bore to the young the consoling tidings, that one of the highest tributes which the God of charity required upon earth—a homage which, in his estimation, outweighed the wisdom of the wise, was the offering of their first affections—the consecration to his service of those hearts which the world had not as yet seduced and blighted.

Hence, in whatsoever country Christianity has appeared, we behold her, after undergoing that baptism of blood, that ordeal of persecution she is everywhere destined to encounter, like the bird in the Gospel, gathering the young beneath her wings, and shielding them from the dangers and temptations which surround them. Filled with her spirit we see a new order of teachers arise, who, attracted neither by the wealth nor fame of this world, but animated by a love of Jesus Christ, which sweetens every trial and braves every privation and difficulty, place all their ambition, all their happiness, in surrounding his altar with those youthful worshippers,

in securing for him the first fruits of their unsullied hearts, anticipating the efforts of the demon, the world, and the passions, to tear them from his embrace, imbuing them with the odour of his divine name, and preparing them by many a lesson of love and wisdom for the trials and temptations of their earthly pilgrimage. Not to mention what had been previously effected by individual efforts and local councils, we behold this charity assuming a systematic form in the commencement of the fifth century in the institution of parochial schools on the part of the parish clergy, and seminaries by the bishops, as well as in the monastic schools, which were diffused throughout the entire of the western Church in the sixth century. How much of the ancient glory of our own country is identified with these Christian Schools! How powerfully did they tend to the diffusion of religion and civilisation throughout the continent of Europe during the subsequent centuries! and how consolatory to recall to mind at this day the testimony of the Venerable Bede to the liberality with which they were conducted! "Many of the noble and middle classes of England (he informs us) left their own country and passed into Ireland, and some within the monasteries, others going about from cell to cell, delighted with receiving instruction from masters, all of whom the Irish liberally received, giving them daily food without price, as also books and instructions gratuitously."

Connected with a subject of such profound interest to every benevolent spirit—so illustrative of the genius of Christianity—and of such vast importance to the present and future generations, it has occurred to us that a brief record of one who was the founder of the Christian Schools of our own day, who drew from the Fountain of light with which his own saintly spirit was constantly in communion, the plan of that magnificent Institute which is now flinging its protecting shadow over the youth of France—an Institute which has accomplished more for the best interests of

society than the combined efforts of all our philosophical and political systems—which has braved the greatest social convulsion that ever shook the world, and is at the present moment far more vigorous and wide-spreading than at any former period, extending its branches from its native soil to the neighbouring countries of Europe, and which is likely to attain a still more glorious extension with the propagation of the faith. Already the Brothers of the Christian Schools are to be seen sharing the labours and perils of our missionaries, the moral acolythes and coadjutors of their glorious ministry, bearing the torch of faith through the darkness of error and the storms of persecution, and ready to share with them the chains of the confessor or the martyr's crown.

The life of the man who founded such an Institute, considered in a mere philosophical point of view, cannot be other than interesting; but viewed in relation to the providence and moral government of that Being who selected him as the instrument of his beneficent designs, its claims upon the attention and sympathy of every Christian reader must be in proportion to the all-important objects with which it is connected. Such a one may not indeed always exhibit those extraordinary talents which fascinate the popular mind—his sphere of action may be obscure and unnoticed, and his immediate success comparatively trifling; the incidents of his career may present no startling vicissitudes, and have little or no connexion with the flow of public events, or the succession of political characters; but he is invested with a moral grandeur, which gives the simplest details of his life a higher and more permanent attraction than the glare of celebrity, or the magic lights of fiction, can impart, either to those who have actually laboured for the applause of this world, or who are held up to it as the ideal paragons of the perfection and greatness it admires. Thus, the memoirs which occupy the following sheets, will be found to derive their peculiar interest less from external circum-

stances than from their intrinsic merit. But to those whose hearts are feelingly alive to the interests of religion—who love to trace the magnificent designs of Providence from their first and almost imperceptible dawning to their meridian splendour and beneficence—who find a lofty pleasure in beholding the beauties of the moral world springing into existence in the light of that paternal countenance—the barren tree bursting into blossoms and fruit, and the cold, ungenial soil kindling into fertility—every plant that is thus arrayed with bloom and plenty for the good of others—every seed that multiplies itself a hundred-fold, for the life and nourishment of the human family, becomes a subject of more delightful contemplation than the whole tribe of those brilliant but unproductive flowers which ambition or vanity has quickened into existence.

The venerable Père de la Salle, the principal incidents of whose life are given in the following slightly-abridged translation, is likely soon to receive the most august and solemn testimonial to his personal sanctity, as well as to the services he has rendered to the Church, when the process for his canonization, now going on most favourably at Rome, shall have terminated. The young will then have an opportunity of interesting still more deeply in their welfare, him who was their benefactor upon earth, and of deriving a constant lesson of instruction from his virtues while invoking a further exercise of his charity.

Identified in spirit and in object with the Institute in France, though entirely independent in government, and connected with it only by the ties of mutual charity, the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Ireland gladly avail themselves of the opportunity of paying, however inadequately, the tribute of their gratitude, veneration, and love to the memory of their illustrious spiritual Father and Patron, by presenting the details of his life to the notice of their countrymen. Next to that object, and the edification which

the perusal of such a life must communicate to every reader, could they cherish a hope of a more specific advantage for the interests of religion and humanity, it would be, that such a publication may awaken in the bosoms of the pious, the talented, and influential, a sympathy for the children of the poor; that it may excite some kindred spirit to contemplate the education of the young in all its momentous importance to the glory of God and the happiness of mankind; and that animated by the example, and inflamed with the love of that merciful Shepherd, who did not disdain to take them to his embrace, he may be induced to extend to them the hand of sympathy and protection—to adopt them as the most precious deposit of Him who loved them more than the blood he shed for them; to teach the untainted heart to throb with his love, and the unsullied lips to celebrate his praise, and thus to secure for him the souls which were purchased at so great a price. Our own country presents an immense field for the exercise of such charity, while the sister countries and the colonies are every day opening missions as glorious and important as the most devoted zeal could desire. But unfortunately the heart of man responds not to these intimations of the Divine goodness, and the labourers are but few in comparison to the extent of the harvest. Let us, however, cherish a hope, that the present religious impulse which is so generally felt, will be every day increased and extended, until the interests of religion shall be viewed in all their paramount importance, when the children of the poor and the suffering shall be recognised as the representatives of Jesus Christ, and faith shall impress on the heart of their benefactors, the consoling assurance, that in receiving one of these their least brethren, they receive Jesus Christ himself.

## C O N T E N T S.

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### INTRODUCTION—P. 13.

Importance of the Christian Schools.

### CHAPTER I—P. 27.

Birth of M. de la Salle—his early education; disposition to piety; and vocation to the ecclesiastical state. He forms the project of founding Christian and gratuitous Schools. Memoir of Madame Maillefer.

### CHAPTER II—P. 38.

Arrival in Rheims of M. Adrien Niel—his character and enterprises. Père Barré—M. de la Salle assumes the charge of the gratuitous schools, which M. Niel had abandoned. M. de la Salle's rules for the masters. He resigns his canonry, and makes a total renunciation of his property in favour of the poor.

### CHAPTER III—P. 53.

M. de la Salle assembles twelve of his disciples, to deliberate with them upon the means of rendering their Society a permanent and useful body to the Church—they take the name of the "*Brothers of the Christian Schools*;" propose to make vows, and adopt a peculiar dress. He prevails on the Brothers to elect a superior in his place; they choose Brother Félix; but M. de la Salle is obliged, shortly after, to resume the superiority.

### CHAPTER IV—P. 65.

Persecution of M. de la Salle and his disciples: a Brother at Guise, who lay at the point of death, wonderfully recovers on being paid a visit by the holy superior—A Seminary is established for the education of young persons desirous of joining the society—Opposition of the school-masters of Paris to M. de la Salle's foundations in that city—his great fatigues bring on a dangerous illness.

### CHAPTER V—P. 75.

Establishment of a novitiate in Vaugirard—Count du Charmel—M. de la Salle draws up Rules for the Institute, which he submits to the Brothers for their approval. He, together with twelve of his disciples, makes perpetual vows of obedience, and of stability in the Institute. He renews his efforts to resign the government of the Institute, but is unable to obtain the Brothers' consent.

### CHAPTER VI—P. 89.

Zeal of M. de la Chezardie for the Christian Schools—Liberality of Madame Voisin—New troubles raised by the school-masters of Paris—James II and the children of his Irish followers—School of Chartres, Calais, and Troyes—Two Brothers are sent to establish themselves at Rome. Fidelity of Brother Drolin.

### CHAPTER VII—P. 103.

Deposition of M. de la Salle from his office of superior—Attachment of the Brothers to the holy Founder—Legal proceedings of the Parisian school-masters against the Brothers—Schools of Darnetal and Rouen—Novitiate of St. Yon. Madame Louvois.

### CHAPTER VIII—P. 118.

M. Rigolet founds a Christian School at Dijon—Excessive labours of the Brothers of Rouen—Schools of Mende.—Lewis XIV supplies funds for an Establishment of the Brothers at Alais—Schools of Grenoble and of St. Denis. M. de la Salle is obliged to remove his novices to Paris from Vaugirard during a famine. Numerous foundations—The Marquis of Colement.

## CHAPTER IX—P. 132.

Proposal of a young ecclesiastic in reference to a Training Establishment—vexatious consequences—M. de la Salle makes a visitation of several Houses—the calumnies of his enemies—dutiful and affectionate conduct of Brother Timothy towards him.

## CHAPTER X—P. 144.

M. de la Salle's visit to the Great Chartreuse—he is courteously received—he returns thence to Grenoble, and takes charge of a School—his patience under a violent attack of rheumatism—Sister Louisa—the Bull *Unigenitus*—his apprehensions lest an ecclesiastic should be placed over the Institute after his death. The chevalier d'Armstadt.

## CHAPTER XI—P. 156.

Loss which the Institute sustained by the death of Lewis XIV—M. de la Salle makes a visitation at Calais and Boulogne—the Brothers hold their second General Chapter, and reluctantly accept the resignation of M. de la Salle—Brother Bartholomew is chosen superior-general—Purchase of the house at St. Yon—The archbishop of Paris prepossessed against M. de la Salle, deprives him of faculties—The holy Founder's last sickness and saintly death.

## CHAPTER XII—P. 170.

Virtues of Ven. de la Salle—the affliction his death caused the Brothers. Decease of Brother Bartholomew—third General Chapter—election of Brother Timothy—his zeal and abilities—he secures to the Institute the permanent possession of St. Yon. The Institute is raised to the dignity of a Religious Order.

## CHAPTER XIII—P. 183.

Fourth General Chapter—translation of Ven. de la Salle's remains to the Church of St. Yon—the fervour and discipline of the Institute—Brother Timothy resigns, and is succeeded by Brother Claude, who governs the Institute sixteen years, then resigns, and is succeeded by Brother Florence—Brother Agathon elected superior in place of Brother Florence, who resigns. Provision is made for superannuated Brothers—Establishment at Melun for training the junior members of the Institute. Brother Agathon makes a general visitation of all the houses—his zeal and other virtues—learning and writings.

## CHAPTER XIV—P. 193.

French Revolution—Dispersion of the Brothers—Massacre of the second of September, in which Brother Solomon falls a victim. Imprisonment of Brother Agathon—Buonaparte's favourable dispositions towards religion. Re-establishment of the Institute.

## CHAPTER XV—P. 203.

Brother Frumentius, Vicar-General of the Society, is recalled from Italy—Schools of Lyons—the Brothers resume their religious dress—new foundations—death of Brother Frumentius—Twelfth General Chapter—Brother Gerbaud elected Superior-General—he removes the seat of his government from Lyons to Paris—his death—Brother William of Jesus, superior—his great virtues—Pope Leo XII takes four Brothers with him to Rome.

## CHAPTER XVI—P. 210.

Fifteenth General Chapter—Brother Anaclet, Superior-General—Suppression of several houses—Ecoles Mutuelles—Schools for Adults—Normal School for the Brothers—appeal to the public in its behalf—Brother Anaclet dies—is succeeded by Brother Philip—State of the Institute in 1842.

## CHAPTER XVII—P. 217.

Rise and progress of the Institute in Ireland.

General Chapters of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in France, p. 227.

# LIFE

OF THE

## VEN. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE.

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### INTRODUCTION.

#### *Importance of the Christian Schools.*

As a knowledge of the Christian Doctrine is necessary to salvation, and as the ministers of religion cannot, on account of the other duties of their calling, give to the instruction of the poor, all the time and attention it demands, the existence of an institute, whose members devote themselves to gratuitous teaching, must be deemed a matter of the first importance.

The Christian Doctrine is so indispensable; that the Son of God became incarnate to teach it to men, by word and example. He went from town to town, and from village to village, to instruct, to catechise, to teach this heavenly doctrine. The miracles which accompanied his preaching were the authentic testimonies which Heaven granted to accredit his doctrine, to dispose the people to hear it with docility, and embrace it with generosity. Children, as well as others, were the objects of his zeal. "Suffer little children to come to me," said he to his disciples, "and forbid them not, for of such is the king-

dom of heaven ;" and so deeply interested was he in their eternal welfare, that he pronounced the most fearful woes against those who would scandalise one of them. Nothing is more necessary to man than a knowledge of the Christian Doctrine ; nothing, then, is assuredly of more importance, than the establishment of schools in which this doctrine is taught with zeal and disinterestedness. In other schools, human science becomes the object of study ; in the Christian Schools, a particular profession is made of teaching this heavenly doctrine, of instructing in the science of salvation.

Human science having for its object things which are perishable, its existence cannot be of long duration. Honour, interest, pleasure, curiosity, which form its attraction, must terminate at the tomb. Not so the doctrine of Jesus Christ : salvation is its direct and immediate end ; eternity the term of its existence. The Son of God descended from heaven to raise man to it ; his whole doctrine tends but to this object ; and hence it is justly termed, the science of salvation, the science of the saints, the science of heaven. For what, in fact, does the Christian Doctrine contain ? Everything which we should believe and do, in order to be saved. And what does the catechist teach ? The very truths which Jesus Christ taught, and which his apostles, by his ordinance, taught after him. On which side soever, then, we consider the Christian Doctrine, it presents the impress of its divine character and origin. The sublimity of its mysteries ; the purity of its morality ; the wisdom of its precepts ; the holiness of its maxims ; the perfection of its counsels ; the grandeur of its promises ; the terrors of its threatenings ; the equity of its judgments ; all feelingly convince us that God is its author.

Compare the doctrine of Christ with that of the philosophers—how sensible the difference ! That of Jesus Christ adheres to its principle and resembles its Author. It contains nothing that is unworthy of God, and that tends not to the sanctification of man. The human mind could not produce a doctrine so connected and replete with sentiments at once so noble, so elevated, and so divine ; of a morality so conformable to right reason, and so fitted for the sanctification of man. Man could not possibly conceive a system of doctrine so perfect. It participates, we may say, of the perfections of its Author and Teacher. Its promises cannot be more munificent ; its morality more pure ; its maxims more holy ; its precepts more just ; its counsels more perfect ; its judgments more enlightened ; its threatenings more terrific. This doctrine is so reasonable, that man becomes unreasonable the moment he ceases to follow it ; it is so equitable, that he becomes a criminal the moment he rejects it ; it is so suitable to man, that there is no peace without its practice ; and it is so perfect, that it raises to perfection all those who faithfully follow it.

Apply what has been said of the Christian Doctrine to the functions of teaching it. The glory of the one is reflected on the other, and both constitute the honour of the Christian Brothers. Catechists by their vocation, and peculiarly destined to teach the doctrine of Christ, they share in the office of teaching the science of the saints. The importance of this science is the measure by which we must estimate the value of their institute. Would we estimate its value to the public, we must weigh on one side the necessity of this heavenly science, and on the other, the necessity of having masters who teach it with zeal, with edification, and with efficiency. We may

say with the celebrated Gerson, that “ those who decry and calumniate such teachers, render immeasurable service to the devil, and labour but too efficaciously to destroy those children whose salvation they should endeavour to promote.” If eternal life consists in knowing the one only God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, how great the misfortune of those poor children, who remain, for want of instruction, ignorant of these salutary truths ! Can such misfortune be sufficiently deplored ? Or can we possess the least portion of zeal if we desire not to see the Christian Schools multiplied on every side, for the diffusion of this divine science ? Is it then in vain that the Holy Ghost recommends so frequently to instruct children well, and to train them up in sanctity : “ Instruct them, and take great care of their childhood.” It is the want of instruction that causes the destruction of the young, and is the greatest wound to the Church ; “ for with them,” as has well been remarked by the pious Gerson, “ the reform of Christian manners must commence.” If this maxim be true, it necessarily follows, that those who put the first hand to the great work, are those who instruct the young, and train them up in sanctity. How precious, then, in public estimation, should be this noble institute, whose members consecrate themselves to so holy a service ! They fill the place of parents, negligent, or incapable of discharging this most important obligation, and are, to the children of the poor, their true fathers and mothers in Jesus Christ.

The Son of God himself was the author and first teacher of the Christian Doctrine. He brought it from heaven ; he taught it upon earth. And how did he teach it ? In a manner at once simple and familiar. The

doctrine taught in the “Christian Schools” is not the doctrine of any mortal man, nor even of an angel. It is as elevated above that of Moses, as Jesus Christ is above the Jewish legislator. God has chosen his own Son to be the oracle of his revelations and of his divine will to man : but that which it has pleased Jesus Christ to reveal to us, is precisely what we learn in the catechism. The person who teaches it is but the echo of “the Word made flesh.” In teaching what he has spoken, either by himself or his apostles, we teach what every Christian should know, and feel an interest in acquiring. It is neither a St. Peter nor a St. Paul who speaks when the doctrine of Jesus Christ is taught in his name and by his authority : it is Jesus Christ himself who speaks by the mouth of the catechist, the catechism from which he instructs being a compendium of the Gospel. The eternal truths we are to believe ; the precepts, the maxims, the counsels we are to follow ; the promises, the threats, on which we are to meditate ; the life, preaching, and death of Jesus Christ, in which we are to be instructed ; his actions, which we are to imitate ; his sacraments, which we are to receive, as the means of everlasting happiness : these six parts of the Christian Doctrine form the entire Gospel. It teaches these and only these.

What immeasurably exalts and ennobles the function of the catechist is, that it was discharged by Jesus Christ and his apostles. The Church, in the early ages, had no teachers but those who resembled the apostles : her most learned bishops and doctors were catechists, each of whom considered this office strictly united to his quality as father and pastor. When the increased number of the faithful obliged the chief pastor to assign this employment to others, their choice fell on the most learned and dignified

of their clergy. This commission was given to Clement of Alexandria, and to others such as he, who were the ornament and honour of the first ages. The catechisms of St. Cyril of Jerusalem have come down to us, and, in the works of St. Augustin, we find one entitled, "An explanation of the Symbol, for the use of Catechumens." This learned doctor felt it even a pleasure to draw up rules and a method for catechising, at the request of a deacon of Carthage, to whom this duty had been intrusted. This work had for its title, "The manner of catechising the ignorant."

What can be more sublime than the truths of the Gospel? The unity of God; the perfect equality of the Three Persons of the adorable Trinity; their eternity, immensity, and other perfections; the creation of heaven and earth; the incarnation of the Eternal Word; original sin and its consequences; the eternity of rewards and punishments, are truths far above our comprehension, but which faith reveals to us, and which, when believed, remove our uncertainties, arrest our wanderings, and satisfy the desires of our hearts by fixing them on objects, invisible indeed, but superior to all others, and alone worthy of our homage and affections. What more divine than the morality of the Gospel, how crucifying soever it may be to the flesh, how bitter soever to nature! The mind is convinced of its beauty, its sanctity, its advantages, even in this life, to those who follow it with a view to salvation. Christian morality is as elevated above that of the sages of this world, as heaven is above earth. We cease to be men when we cease to follow it. Pride, envy, impiety, make men the living images of the demon. Avarice, intemperance, anger, render them similar to beasts. Where Christianity does not exist, we shall not

find humanity, generosity, or sincere friendship. Do not injustice, violence, and rage, reign universally where the faith of Jesus Christ has not been preached? And if, among Christians, these vices are found to exist, it is because they forget their obligations; and the number is becoming every day greater, as efforts are continually being made to extinguish in the hearts of men the remembrance of Christian maxims. But when men live according to the Gospel, and that there is no opposition between their belief and morals, humility, meekness, and integrity reign among them: the law of God is the law of their hearts, as well as the principle and guide of their actions.

When the Christian Doctrine is preached to infidel nations, they soon cease to be what they were, and change their morals with their belief. From being cruel and blood-thirsty, they become humane, meek, and charitable; they cease to be sensual, avaricious, and immoral, and equal in their conduct the fervour and regularity of the primitive Christians.

Put the Christian Doctrine to the test. Is there a single portion of it which does not inculcate the most sublime morality? Examine every other doctrine by the same rule, and you will be convinced of its folly, its extravagance, and its impiety. What religion but the Catholic, teaches with so much exactness, the duties we are to render to God and to our neighbour? What a sublime idea does it not give of the majesty of God! With what respect does it not require us to render him the profound adoration which it prescribes! Could the interests of mankind be better provided for, than in the law, which regards as self, the neighbour, without exception of persons, times, circumstances, riches, poverty,

friends, or enemies ? Its observance to the letter, by numberless saints of both sexes, proves uncontestedly, that however perfect it may be, or however difficult in appearance, it is practicable to all ; the grace of God rendering it easy and agreeable. Examine it closely. What does it propose to be believed in which there is for the soul the least risk ? or, what does it ordain which is injurious to our welfare, temporal or spiritual ? In believing and practising what it teaches, we find security. In refusing such obedience, we expose ourselves to every danger. Experience proves, that when a person has a lively faith in these truths, he reforms his morals, becomes detached from the world, thinks of the terrible Judge before whom he is to appear, endeavours to disarm his justice, to do penance for his sins, gives himself to the practice of virtue, and omits nothing to ensure his eternal happiness. If, on the contrary, he has the misfortune to listen to the doubts which impiety furnishes, he exposes himself to live an atheist or a libertine ; a stranger to God, without faith, or religion, or conscience ; without hope or fear for the future ; he lives, in fine, more like a beast or a demon than a man.

What does he not risk in rejecting this faith ! He exposes himself to drink iniquity like water ; to make no difference between good and evil ; to make no more account of virtue than of vice ; to desire nothing but that which perishes with us ; in a word, to become incredulous, unjust, intemperate, and immoral ; and to procure for himself, both in this world and in the other, all the evils which are the ordinary consequences of these vices. Ask the criminal, undergoing the penalty of his crimes, what has led to his misfortune ; and must he not acknowledge, that it is chiefly traceable to his forgetfulness or contempt of religion ?

What is most admirable in the Christian Doctrine is, its unity and simplicity, and that, with a single word, it determines every duty with regard to God and our fellow-creature,—duties which required whole volumes from the ancient philosophers who gave lessons of morality; for to speak truly, there is, in the Christian law, but one precept, that of charity. To love God in himself and for himself, and to love the neighbour in God and for God; this is the sovereign, the universal precept, the soul of the law, and the principle of all the virtues which tend to the glory of God, and to the sanctification and happiness of man.

What a difference between the masters of divine and the masters of human science! What time, labour, and study, are necessary for acquiring a perfect knowledge of the latter! Philosophy, jurisprudence, mathematics, and medicine, require many years of studious application, to obtain any proficiency in them; and this one sentence, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy neighbour as thyself,” teaches every man, what, during his whole life, he is to do and to avoid. The faithful practice of this commandment makes man a saint, renders him, in this world, worthy of the esteem of his fellow-creatures, and prepares for him an eternal and infinite recompense.

If the Christian Doctrine proposes the belief of mysteries the most sublime and the most incomprehensible, it does it in a manner which cannot be clearer or more intelligible. Jesus Christ, in proposing his dogmas, confirmed them by miracles, which rendered them indubitable. To be persuaded fully of the truth of the Christian Doctrine, it is sufficient to believe it on the authority of the Son of God, who has revealed it to men; there is no

need of employing discussion, study, or reasoning, as we do in other sciences. This divine authority is founded upon the words of Jesus Christ, and on the miracles by which it has been confirmed ; and this method of teaching, by authority, is at once the shortest, the most sublime, the most reasonable, and the most suitable to mankind. It is the *most sublime*, because it alone is worthy of God, and suitable to his infinite Majesty. He is the supreme Truth ; he cannot deceive nor be deceived ; he alone has a right to exact from his creatures a blind submission to all that he says, whether he speaks by himself or by his organ, the Church. It is the *shortest*, since it requires but a single moment to be persuaded of it ; and since the submission which faith demands, is founded on the authority of God, who has spoken, and confirmed his word by a succession of splendid miracles. It is the *most reasonable*, because, if on the one side it proposes things to be believed which are above reason, it furnishes, on the other, legitimate motives of belief, in showing that it is God himself who has spoken, and manifested his divine power in confirmation of his doctrine. It is the *most suitable to man*, since all can and ought to believe an infallible authority, while few are capable of study, discussion, or profound reasoning. Can we possibly refuse to yield our assent to truths which are so clear and evident, and of such great consequence for time and eternity ? What esteem, then, ought we to entertain for persons who embrace a state consecrated to impart these truths to the children of the poor, and who have no other view, or interest, or advantage, but the salvation of these objects of their care and solicitude !

If those who are indifferent to the existence of Christian Schools would reflect on the services which the pub-

lic receive from them, they would become zealous for their establishment, and would be obliged to acknowledge, that both Church and State are equally interested in patronising an institution, which furnishes masters capable of discharging their duties with success and edification. A very little attention will convince us that every portion of the community is deeply indebted to those who undertake the religious education of the young. They are the beneficent instruments of divine Providence, the substitutes of parents and pastors; the apostles and visible guardian angels of the poor.

Let us develop a little these glorious titles of the Christian Brothers; nothing is more calculated to give the public and themselves a high esteem for their vocation and its duties.—1. They are the instruments of God's goodness, with reference to the salvation of children, the poorest and the most abandoned; teaching them to know, and love, and serve their Creator. God wills that all men should come to a knowledge of him and of his holy law; but how will the children of the poor acquire this knowledge, if there are not Christian and gratuitous Schools in which these truths are taught them?—2. They are the substitutes of parents in the Christian education of their children. The poor, occupied as they are in labouring for their subsistence and that of their children, have not the means, nor the time, nor the knowledge necessary for the discharge of this important duty. It is, then, Divine Providence that has given the children of the poor these fathers and mothers according to grace, who supply the place of their natural parents, by instructing them in those truths of which they would otherwise remain ignorant.—3. The Christian Brothers are the apostles and visible guardian angels of the children, con-

fided to their care, instructing them in their duties, guiding them in the way of virtue, and imparting to them a knowledge of the science of the saints. Nothing is more ordinary in towns and in the country, than to see the children of the poor wandering about, adepts in all the evil which the devil inspires, and occupied in amusements which corrupt their morals, and lead to the most dangerous excesses. They want persons who would draw them from these disorders, or who would give them such a horror of them as to cause a thorough reformation. To estimate the value of the Christian Schools, compare the children of those places in which they exist, with those who have not the happiness of possessing them. In the one, what levity, what impiety, what irreverence in the church ! in the other, what recollection in their prayers, what modesty in their conduct, what piety towards God, what submission to their parents, what charity towards each other ! Nothing is more common than to find in the Christian Schools children, attached to their duties, docile to their parents ; who render to God, night and morning, the homages which are due to him ; who are modest in the church ; who know how to examine their consciences, make their confessions, prepare themselves for the holy table, at which they prove by their recollection, how deeply they are penetrated with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Are these fruits of trifling import ? Can we sufficiently estimate them ? What zeal should we not, then, feel in forwarding a work so fruitful in virtue and in merits !

The doctrine and example of the saints, the decrees of councils, and the ordinances of kings, show what esteem we should entertain for Christian and gratuitous Schools.

We have already said, that the simple and familiar manner resembling catechetical instruction, was that which the great Master of heavenly wisdom, and his apostles, after him, made use of to spread throughout the world his evangelical doctrine. The function of catechising and instructing the catechumens was one attached to the episcopacy. Things remained in this condition until the greater part of the people having embraced Christianity, the want of catechumens caused the function of catechist insensibly to decline. Fathers and mothers, and in case of their neglect, god-fathers and god-mothers, had the charge of teaching children the Christian Doctrine. Masters qualified to teach it were not then necessary, until parents, failing in this duty, neglected the instruction of those whom they brought into the world. The Church was then careful to provide Christian and gratuitous Schools, besides recommending her ministers to explain the catechism with zeal and assiduity. Almost all the councils have made, in this matter, the wisest ordinances. The establishment, in episcopal churches, of rector or chancellor, shows for more than five hundred years how much our fathers felt interested in schools for the instruction of the young. Those who held this office were charged to watch over the juvenile schools, to see that good order was maintained in them, and to preserve them from that relaxation which causes the best and most useful institutions gradually to degenerate. The greatest men, and the greatest saints, have manifested the most ardent zeal for the teaching of the Christian Doctrine. St. Ignatius, in Europe ; St. Francis Xavier, in the Indies ; the illustrious St. Charles Borromeo, at Milan ; the venerable Cesar de Busto, in Italy ; Bartholomew de Martyribus, in Spain ; St. Vincent of Paul and M. Olier, in

Paris; Père Eude, in Normandy; M. le Noblest, in Brittany; Père Barré, at Rouen, have proved by their conduct that they saw nothing more glorious to God, nor more useful to man, than to instruct the young in the Christian Doctrine, thereby to confirm them in the practice of every virtue.

M. de la Salle, who caught the spirit and zeal of these virtuous and charitable men, consecrated all his talents and industry to form masters who would adopt his views and labour for the salvation of those poor children who are most commonly abandoned to ignorance and to the most shameful corruption. We may say, that if he has embraced the labours, he has also inherited the persecutions which the devil never fails to raise up against those who would destroy his empire. But, thanks to the mercy of God! the children of this charitable father now enjoy the fruit of his labours, and leave nothing undone to fulfil his intentions, and merit the esteem due to an Institute, which has no other object than to render so many subjects of this kingdom useful to the state, and faithful to that God from whom they are to expect an eternal recompense.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE subject of these memoirs was one of those extraordinary men, whom God raises up, in the days of his mercy, for the edification of his Church and the salvation of his people. He was born at Rheims on the 30th of April, 1651, of parents who were as exalted by their virtue, as by the respectability of their station ; and was the first fruit with which heaven blessed the union of Mademoiselle Moët de Brouillet with M. de la Salle, counsellor in the Presidial Court of Rheims. At his baptism he received the name of John Baptist. The sequel of his life shows how just were his claims to bear that glorious name ; for he united the most penitential life with an innocence which was never tarnished for an instant.

From his tender years his pious mother formed his heart to virtue, in which his progress was astonishingly rapid, and only equalled by that which, in riper years, he made in learning, while in the university of Rheims. His parents fondly hoped he would in time become the support of their family. Indeed, he possessed all those qualifications which are calculated to secure the esteem of the world, as learning, wit, address, penetration, and honourable descent. The highest ambition of his father was, that he should become a man of probity and respectability—an upright magistrate. God had destined him, however, for something more elevated ; he heard his voice—he obeyed.

On declaring his vocation to the ecclesiastical state, his parents saw that all their hopes would be frustrated,

and all their projects overturned. Yet, being full of faith, they became resigned. Like all true Christians, the young de la Salle had a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. On this occasion he redoubled his prayers, beseeching the holy Virgin to present him to her divine Son, that he might become a worthy minister of the altar. After such holy preparations, he appeared at the feet of his archbishop like an angel, begging to be admitted into the sanctuary. At the moment of receiving the tonsure, he said with the royal Prophet, "*Lord, thou shalt be my inheritance for ever.* Thy love is the only wealth that I desire; thou shalt be my *all* upon earth, until thou accomplish my happiness in heaven."

The Church of Rheims, so remarkable for the saints and learned men that it produced, was highly gratified on having so promising a young man enrolled among its clergy. He was closely united with it by a canonry, procured for him at the age of seventeen—not by family influence, but by personal merit; M. Dozet, archdeacon and chancellor of the university, having resigned in his favour. His elevation became to him only a source of greater humility.

The Abbé de la Salle, having finished his philosophy at Rheims, repaired to Paris to complete his course of theology. M. Tronson was then principal of the seminary of St. Sulpice, and M. Bouin its enlightened director. A young man with the dispositions of M. de la Salle, could not, under such guides, but advance in sanctity and learning. From a principle of piety, he was assiduous to acquire what would qualify him for the sacred ministry.

Heaven interrupted the course of his studies by a me-

lancholy event : his mother died on the 20th July, 1671. Sanctity is not inconsistent with sensibility ; it only requires that we be resigned to the decrees of Providence. He shed abundance of tears, and thus addressed himself to the Author of all consolations : " Lord, thou knowest how dear to me was my departed mother. If I have had the happiness to merit any favour from your mercy, have pity on her soul, and place it in a state of eternal repose." In a few months after, he received intelligence of the death of his father. This new disaster made it necessary for him to interrupt his studies in order to assume the guardianship of his brothers and sisters, and to direct their education.

On his return from Paris, he found the family in the deepest affliction. He received many valuable services from M. Roland, a canon of Rheims, whose memory shall ever be held sacred in that city for his charitable deeds, but particularly for his exertions to procure a gratuitous and Christian education for poor neglected female children.

M. de la Salle desired, with a holy dread, to be invested with the sacred character of priesthood. This honour was conferred on him by his archbishop, M. le Tellier, on Holy Saturday, in the year 1671. It was an edifying spectacle to behold him at the altar, where he appeared like a seraph, penetrated with respect, with faith, and with love : nor did his familiarity with the sacred functions abate his assiduity in preparing devoutly to offer the adorable sacrifice.

Through a motive of zeal, the Abbé de la Salle exchanged his canonry for a parish ; the archbishop, however, refused to ratify the proceeding, being unwilling that the chapter of his cathedral should be deprived of a

canon of such transcendent merit and exemplary piety. God wished, by the opposition of M. le Tellier, to remove an obstacle to the accomplishment of his own designs ; for it is probable that had the intended change taken place, the congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools would never have been instituted.

M. Roland, being now old, and seeing that according to the course of nature, he must soon terminate his earthly career, placed under the care of M. de la Salle, the community of the *Filles de l'Enfant Jesus*, whose institute had not as yet acquired any considerable degree of stability. This institute, and that of the *Filles de la Providence*, gave gratuitous instruction to female children ; and so great was the demand for subjects on the Rev. Père Barré, their founder, that he could not, without difficulty, satisfy the numerous applications for them. The magistrates of Rheims objected to their being introduced into that city ; but the virtues of M. de la Salle obliged them to yield. The archbishop not only consented, but he used his influence with his brother, M. de Louvois, then minister to Lewis XIV ; and letters patent were obtained, by which these religious were permanently established.

Any pleasure that could arise to M. de la Salle from his success on this occasion, was tempered by the contradictions with which he had at that time to contend. No seminary could be better regulated than his house. He had appointed hours for rising, reading, prayer, and study : silence was observed, and a spiritual lecture read, during refection. His brothers, whom he educated in his own house, were accustomed to these rules ; yet he introduced them but successively, and at their own desire. This discipline was construed into excessive and unnecessary ri-

gour. He was charged with making his brothers the victims of his austere singularity, and with being a disgrace to his family, and to the illustrious chapter of which he was a member. By these charges he lost none of his tranquillity ; neither did he conform himself to the opinions of his accusers. On the contrary, he became more austere, confining himself to the use of simple necessities. His economy enabled him to give large alms to the poor, whom he frequently visited, administering to their wants, both spiritual and physical.

It was with great difficulty he overcame his natural inclination to drowsiness. He gave his servant instructions to call him at four o'clock every morning, and not to quit him until dressed. The abbé, when dressed, commenced prayer, but sleep quickly returned. Entering into a holy anger against himself, he condemned himself to the kneeling, during prayer, on sharp-pointed stones, and thus succeeded in defeating his enemy ; as the continual pain which they occasioned, kept him always attentive. This was but a prelude to the mortifications which he practised when superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools ; and it was thus, though unconscious of it himself, that God disposed him for the great work of their institution.

The pious Père Barré having provided for the gratuitous education of poor female children, by the institution of the *Filles de la Providence*, contemplated the establishment of schools for poor boys, that *they* also might receive a Christian and gratuitous education. But so many and so great were the difficulties which thwarted his designs, that all his endeavours to accomplish it proved fruitless. For M. de la Salle were reserved the success and the glory of that great undertaking.

The first instrument which God selected for the fulfil-

ment of his designs upon M. de la Salle, was a lady, whose history is somewhat romantic and extraordinary. She was born at Rheims, of opulent parents, who gave her an education suitable to their rank, and endowed her with an ample fortune. Many wealthy and respectable persons sought her in marriage; but M. de Maillefer, Maitre des Comptes of Rouen, though not rich, was the object of her choice: with him she came to fix her residence in the capital of Normandy.

Madame Maillefer was a woman in whose vices and virtues there was no mediocrity. Before her conversion she was excessively vicious; when converted, she carried virtue to the most exalted perfection. To a lively and playful imagination, she united all the exterior charms of personal attraction. In her person she was tall and finely formed; and her mien was so tempered with a graceful dignity, as to inspire her beholders with respect. An insatiable desire to please and to make conquests, was the soul of all her actions; and being well persuaded of her merit, according to the world, she neglected nothing to heighten its effect. At all times she exhibited herself in the most gaudy attractions of worldly vanity; nor were her luxury and her dress, though ruinous to her husband, ever too excessive for her taste. That she might not become wearied by too great a sameness, and to make new impressions, she studied new modes of dress; and to succeed the better, she procured a statue of exactly her own size and figure, which was daily dressed agreeably to her taste, and according to the effect, she decided on the day's apparel. She was the first to admire her own charms, and was fully conscious of the advantages they gave her over her disconcerted rivals. Operas, plays, and public promenades were the ordinary theatres of her

vain-glorious exhibitions. It may well be supposed that M. Maillefer suffered much from his union with a woman of such a character ; however, his attachment to her being great, he defrayed, without a murmur, her extravagant expenses. Those of dress and of the table were enormous, not to speak of what she incurred by gambling. Madame Maillefer would have deemed herself disgraced by moderate play. She would partake of nothing but the most exquisite delicacies ; and was served with a magnificence scarcely to be rivalled among the *noblesse*.

To so many unpardonable defects in a Christian, she added an extreme hardness of heart towards the poor. An aged mendicant, highly deserving of compassion, came to the gate one evening, begging an asylum for the night. The coachman, who happened to be present, went to solicit his mistress to afford shelter to the poor creature, adding, that it was now too late for him to seek elsewhere. “*No,*” said the inhuman woman, “*I will have no beggar received into my house ; let the gate be instantly closed.*” The coachman, indignant at this reply, would not obey, admitted the poor man by stealth into the stable, and gave him some straw for his bed. The poor miserable man was found dead the next morning. Madame Maillefer was soon informed of it : she flew into a furious rage against the coachman ; and having vented her passion in a thousand opprobrious epithets, ordered him to quit her house, with a prohibition of ever returning. With much reluctance she yielded to the entreaties of the servants for something wherein to wrap the body of the deceased, that it might be interred. Being at supper in the evening, intent only on the gratification of her sensuality, she beheld on the table the same cloth which she had given in the morning for the interment of the corpse.

She demanded in angry terms, why the cloth she had given was not used. The servants, more terrified at the event than at her threats, replied, that her orders were obeyed, and that the cloth and the corpse were interred together.

This was for Madame Maillefer the moment of God's infinite mercy. At this reply the blood freezed in her veins ; she was seized with a sudden horror, which prevented utterance, while the voice of God, speaking to her heart by this prodigy, invited her to repentance. On a sudden, the disorders of her life were represented to her mind with all their aggravating circumstances. She was confounded at seeing herself so criminal ; her heart, until then hard and rebellious to grace, became mollified ; and the intense sorrow with which she was penetrated, manifested itself by torrents of bitter tears, by the total change of her conduct, and by the austerities to which she subjected herself. God has conducted many great saints by extraordinary ways ; this consideration should not be lost sight of in the perusal of the remainder of this sketch. Her plan of life was quickly formed. Nothing could be more contrary to the maxims of a world, which is the declared enemy of the cross. She commenced by asking pardon of her servants for the bad example she had given them. To mark her eternal divorce from the world, and to place herself under the happy necessity of withdrawing from its commerce, she procured a very singular garb. On the Sunday after her conversion, she went on foot to the High Mass of the parish church, in her usual gaudy attire ; to which she added a filthy coarse linen apron. In this state she excited the attention of all ; to some she was an object of mute astonishment—to others, of laughter and ridicule. This exhibition occasioned a considerable

sensation in the city : M. Maillefer was overwhelmed with shame ; and felt it necessary to exert his authority to prevent a similar occurrence.

The humble penitent respected the orders of her husband while he lived ; it was only after his death that she could give scope to her fervour. Thenceforward simplicity reigned in her apparel ; her repasts announced her spirit of mortification ; her sleep was short and regulated ; she was assiduous at prayer and in relieving the poor. Her husband furthered her designs of retreat from the world, and at her request founded a school for poor female children at Darnetal, a large village, three miles distant from Rouen. He died some months after, leaving her at liberty to indulge her love of penance and abjection ; for though he had for a long time after her happy change considered her as insane, he now respected her as a saint, conducted by the spirit of God.

Madame Maillefer becoming mistress of herself, got a dress of divers coloured scraps of stuff, a scarf of black linen, coarse shoes, a corresponding head-dress : thus, with a large staff in her hand, she went on Sunday to the mid-day Mass at the cathedral, where she had so often, before her conversion, appeared in all her splendour. She took her seat in the midst of the church. Her wish was to be despised : she succeeded. As she passed along the street the populace derided her ; while she, as if insensible to their insults, recited the penitential psalms, or the Te Deum, or casting a look of sorrow on a crucifix which she held, bedewed it with her tears. Her mortifications in private were inconceivable. Almost all her revenues were distributed among the poor ; and a room without furniture, open to the winds of heaven, was her dwelling. At dawn she was to be seen at the church of St. Nicais,

in prayer or contemplation ; the greater portion of the remaining part of the day she devoted to the sick who were in the Magdalen hospital, to whom she rendered the most lowly services.

To punish herself for the pleasure she had taken in shining in society by the charms of a cultivated and playful mind, she feigned stupidity and mental imbecility, and so effectively, that many, not well acquainted with her, believed the reality conformable to appearances : her director and a few persons who knew her intimately, respected and admired the divine operations of grace hidden under an abject exterior. At length, however, the most prejudiced began to venerate her for her constancy in a life so repugnant to human nature : they were obliged to acknowledge the work of God, who, when he pleases, can change the greatest sinner into a vessel of election.

Madame Maillefer felt a peculiar inclination to exhort the dying ; and it appeared that the Lord had bestowed on her the gift of succeeding in this work of truly Christian charity, the recompense of which was accelerated by the misfortunes which desolated France in 1693. Rouen, in common with many other cities, was, at this period, afflicted with the *purple fever*. This frightful contagion daily swept away numbers of inhabitants, who were not in a state to guard against its attacks ; the hospitals were filled, and that of Magdalen, though very large, could not contain the numbers that were sent thither. Additional fatigue to Madame Maillefer was a consequence of the calamity. She assisted the sick there with increased zeal and assiduity, and being reckless of precaution against a disorder so easily communicated, she soon caught the contagion. Her courage enabled her to make efforts against it, but in vain ; the violence of the disease over-

powered her. Feeling her end approach, she, with tears in her eyes, quitted the objects of her charitable solicitude, announcing to them, that they should never behold her again. It was ten at night ; she retired with much difficulty to her room, where she passed the night upon straw, in fervent prayer, awaiting her last moment.

The superioress of Magdalen Hospital and M. Le Paon, who was afterwards curé of St. Nicais, became very soon acquainted with her danger. They repaired instantly to her room to afford her all necessary succours, both spiritual and corporal. They found her alone, abandoned, wanting everything, almost expiring, her arms extended, and her eyes lifted up to heaven. Words failed them ; she was the first to offer them consolation. In this situation she displayed a tranquillity, nay, even a joy, which showed that, though destitute of human succour, she had that which is divine. Having received the last sacraments, she fell into an ecstacy of love, and pronouncing these words, "*My God, I go to thee,*" she expired.

Thus died, after fifteen years passed in the heroic practice of all Christian virtues, this woman, who, before her conversion, had given so much scandal, and indulged in all the excesses of worldly vanity. Those who were present at her death were seized with a religious respect, which her sanctity inspired. Instantly the news of her death was spread abroad : a large concourse assembled ; each wished to possess some memorial of the *saint*, as she was then called, but scarcely anything could be found with a woman who had reserved for herself nothing. For want of clothes or furniture, they took her hair, and kept it as an invaluable treasure.

## CHAPTER II.

Madame Maillefer, after her conversion, among other works of charity, contributed largely to the founding of Christian and gratuitous schools. The plan of the Rev. Père Barré, already mentioned, coinciding with her views, she endeavoured to carry into effect the benevolent intentions of that pious Minim. Having witnessed the happy effects produced by the school, founded in Darnetal by her husband, she laboured strenuously to found a similar school in the city of Rheims.

At her desire, M. Roland placed a subject belonging to Père Barré, as superioress over the house of the Infant Jesus. Madame Maillefer resolved to establish also in Rheims a gratuitous school for boys, but experienced considerable difficulty in the execution of this project. To succeed in the undertaking, it was necessary to have the co-operation of a man of address, zeal, and perseverance. She was happy enough to find one of this character in M. Adrian Niel, a native of Laon, who had already given proof of skill in such negotiations. He had come to Rouen for the purpose of founding there Christian Schools, but, at the entreaty of Madame Maillefer, who granted to him and another young man an annual salary of 100 crowns, he resolved on making Rheims the theatre of his labours. In 1679 he set out for Rheims, with letters of recommendation to the superioress above mentioned. At the door he met M. de la Salle, to whom he had also a letter of introduction from Madame Maillefer. The matter was debated : the prospects were gloomy, and success seemed doubtful.

Though M. Niel was to have lodged at the house of Madame Maillefer's brother, yet the kind and charitable canon addressed him thus : " Come, lodge with me ; it is known in the city that my house is a kind of hotel for country priests. You resemble them in your dress ; it will not excite surprise to see you there, and no person will pry into your designs, or even entertain a suspicion of them. You can pass eight days with me ; we shall reflect at leisure on the matter, and make the necessary arrangements. You can then perform your intended pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Liesse. While you are absent I will arrange everything ; and, perhaps, at your return, you may be able to open a school publicly."

Both prudence and generosity appeared in this proposal, and M. Niel accepted the offer. Already M. de la Salle laboured for the good work ; he consulted God in prayer ; he begged his light to guide him in a matter concerning his own honour and glory. Next he addressed himself to Père Claude de Bretagne, prior of St. Remy, and to many other ecclesiastics, remarkable for their exalted piety. A conference was held ; the project was admitted to be good ; it only remained to devise means of carrying it into effect. Many plans were suggested. M. de la Salle proposed that they should bring some zealous curé into their measures : and M. d'Origny, curé of St. Maurice's, was selected. This worthy pastor, who had already formed the design of establishing a gratuitous school, embraced the proposal with pleasure, and even generously resigned his house to M. Niel and his companion, by whom a school was immediately opened.

M. Niel's restless disposition set him upon new projects. He heard of a Madame de Croyères, a widow lady, who had an idea of founding a school in the parish

of St. James: He waited on her; she seemed well disposed; but he was a stranger to her; he had, moreover, the appearance of an adventurer. Perceiving her difficulties, he made reference to M. de la Salle, who bore testimony to M. Niel's probity and capacity. The abbé soon after paid her a visit, to whose care she confided the intended establishment; and as a commencement, promised 500 livres in two months, and a considerable sum to perpetuate the foundation. At the appointed time she paid the 500 livres; and before her death, which happened shortly after, she bequeathed 10,000 livres for the foundation of a gratuitous school.

Five masters became now necessary for M. d'Origny's schools. They were procured, and lodged in his house; but he required, for the support of each, 200 livres instead of 50 crowns. This additional expense was defrayed by M. de la Salle, who, however, was of opinion that such projects should not be carried forward without mature consideration. M. Niel, pious and zealous at heart, no sooner saw St. James's school established, than he thought of opening many others. Numberless movements and continual visits were the consequence; of course he could have no assiduity in his school duties, nor vigilance over the masters with respect to theirs. Each did agreeably to his own wishes; there was neither uniformity nor system among them, and the public were badly served. M. de la Salle saw at once the evil and the difficulty of applying a remedy. The few moments he had to spare daily, were devoted to the study of theology, in which he received the degree of doctor, in 1681, being then at the age of thirty.

An accident which occurred to him about this time, proved nearly fatal to his existence. One day, as he

returned from the country, the ground was covered with snow: he lost his way, and fell into an abyss, remote from any human succour: to die under a heap of snow was the gloomy prospect. Without losing his tranquillity, he implored aid from the Father of mercy. The snow, assuming a consistency, became hardened beneath his feet: by an effort he was enabled to withdraw himself from the danger; but that he should retain a grateful recollection of the divine interposition, God afflicted him with a rupture.

He had too great a share in the establishing of the schools to remain insensible to the disorder now reigning in them, and the want of discipline among the masters. He proposed to M. Niel, that they should live near his own house. M. Niel consented, and carried the proposal into effect, not only because it would prove beneficial to the masters, but would give himself an opportunity of paying frequent visits in the city.

The zealous canon drew up rules for this little community. He regulated the time of rising, and of retiring to rest—for refection, prayer, lecture, mass, and communion: in fine, he established among them a community-life, of which they soon began to reap the advantages. These salutary regulations having proved insufficient for his purpose, M. de la Salle began to think seriously of lodging the masters in his own house, though he foresaw the opposition that might be given by his three brothers, who lodged with him, and even by the chapter of which he was a member. Not depending on his own light, he consulted the pious Père Barré, who declared that he believed the thought was inspired by God, and exhorted the abbé to follow it, notwithstanding any human contradiction. Divine Providence gave

rise to an incident which brought this matter to a conclusion.

The reputation of the schools having reached the magistrates of Guise, they requested of M. Niel to open a school in that town. Nothing could be more conformable to the desires of M. Niel; so he departed, contrary to the wishes of M. de la Salle. To go live with the masters, or to have them come live with him, was the only part that now remained for M. de la Salle: he chose the latter, because his house was sufficiently large to accommodate five new guests; but he gave them the use of it in the day time only.

At early dawn they came to their new superior, and returned to their house in the evening. Prayer was made in common, and during refection, there was a spiritual lecture read. When M. Niel returned, these regulations were so well established, that he found no difficulty in observing them to the letter. To put their constancy to the test, before admitting them entirely to his house, he obliged them to observe this rule of life from Easter, 1681, to St. John the Baptist's day following. On that day he had so much reason to be satisfied with their fidelity and docility, that he gave them unreserved possession of his house. This last step drew upon him not only the displeasure of his own family, but of nearly the whole city: thus the works of God are condemned by worldly prudence.

M. de la Salle bore the malignity of this storm with courage, because he had not exposed himself to its fury without the light of heaven. When his friends saw his unshaken firmness, they endeavoured to withdraw from him his three brothers, under the pretext of procuring for them a better education: they succeeded with the two

youngest ; the eldest remained unmoved. In a short time, M. de la Salle purchased another house, which, in fact, may be called the cradle of the Institute. On his removal to this, its discipline began to assume the appearance of that of a regularly constituted establishment.

The very high idea which the masters had of his sanctity, and the filial confidence which they reposed in him, induced them to select him as their confessor : he refused his consent, to their great mortification, and directed them to the curé of a neighbouring parish. Though he was a good man, still they found him not well qualified to direct persons living in community. Another was tried in a more distant parish ; but his confessional was generally so crowded, that the masters often could not return before nine o'clock in the evening. They again entreated M. de la Salle to become their confessor, and were successful.

A life of such retirement becoming insensibly wearisome to some of the masters, they returned into the world. Several months passed without any substitutes for them in the rising Institute. Those who remained, showed the very best dispositions : they found nothing too difficult in the practice of virtue ; and they acquitted themselves of their external employments with edification. Applications were made to M. de la Salle from several places to have such teachers : the first was from Réthel. M. Niel joined in the solicitation ; for new establishments were his sole desire. The wise superior replied to the inhabitants, that for their own interest, they should wait for some time ; that the masters he could send them were not yet in a state to fill the important situation destined for them ; that his great object was public utility ; and that their application would be the first to which he would

attend. A reply thus couched was not a refusal ; yet it spoke of delay. The applicants were not content ; they conjured the duke de Mazarin to support their prayer. He succeeded ; and M. Niel was deputed to open the new establishment. The inhabitants contributed to the support of two masters, and the duke was among the founders. M. Niel's establishment at Guise was no sooner formed, than it fell into decay ; yet the magistrates solicited for masters formed under M. de la Salle : they were accordingly sent ; and Mademoiselle de Guise granted a sufficient salary for their support.

The schools of Chateau-Portier, and of Laon, were established at the same time. M. Niel lived two years successively at Laon, where his fickle character became known. Chagrined at not having new establishments to found, he returned to Rouen, and left the care of the rising Institute totally to M. de la Salle. At this painful news, M. de la Salle determined to add the fatigue of attending the schools, to that of forming the masters. Though they showed good dispositions, yet he had much to suffer from the dissimilarity of education, and from the efforts necessary to give them a just idea of a religious life.

Anxieties respecting their future fate, arose in the minds of those men, who were still of earthly mould. They asked each other, “ Is there anything permanent in our present situation ? What shall become of us if our father abandon us, or death take him away ? Our youth is passing in this house, and if we lose him, our lot will be poverty and contempt.” Their fears appeared to them too just not to be entertained. A coldness ensued : M. de la Salle affectionately inquired the cause. Being simple and attached to him, they freely avowed their

apprehensions. A holy indignation seized him in seeing their diffidence in God. "Men of little faith," said he to them, "who has given you the hardihood to prescribe limits to an infinite bounty? You ask for assurances; does not the Gospel present you with them? Do you require any stronger than the express words of Jesus Christ? It is an engagement that he has sealed with his own blood. Know, that your diffidence is an outrage against him. 'Behold,' says this God full of love, 'the lilies of the fields; see with what magnificence the heavenly Father has clothed them: Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these!' Cast your eyes upon the birds which cleave the air, or upon the most vile insects which crawl upon the earth: is there one of them that wants what is necessary? Cannot the Lord who has created them, abundantly supply their wants? They derive each day from his liberal hands, more than a sufficient subsistence; they neither sow nor reap, yet they want nothing for their support. Why? Because our heavenly Father has taken upon himself to provide for them. Now, if the goodness of God extends to beings that we regard as contemptible, and that we daily tread under foot, can you believe that you shall not also be the objects of his tender cares; that he will allow you to terminate in appalling misery a life, which you have employed in his service? Banish, then, far from you, a diffidence which is so insulting to him. Cast yourselves into the arms of his tenderness, without care for the present, without anxiety about the future. Think continually only of testifying to him your gratitude for all the favours which you have already received from him. Let not your solicitude extend even as far as to-morrow. He who has given you so many proofs that he is your Father, will

continue them during your life-time. His mercy will not become weary in doing you good."

Affecting as this discourse was, it made little impression on the auditors. They were aware that he possessed a patrimony and a benefice, which would place him beyond the reach of those wants anticipated by themselves. At first they could not bring themselves to speak to him of the disparity between his condition and theirs; particularly as they saw that he distributed his revenues liberally among the poor; but on a subsequent occasion they charged him with it openly. He, therefore, resolved to reduce himself to a state of poverty and dependance.

Before taking this step of a total renunciation of property, he consulted the Lord in prayer, and had recourse to those who held his place on earth. Père Barré was the first to whom he addressed himself. To dispose of his patrimony in the founding of schools was his intention; the pious Minim disapproved of this project; "for the protection of the eternal Father," he said, "was the most assured of all support." He commented on these words of our Saviour, "*The foxes have their dens, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay his head.*" "Who," said he, "are those foxes? They are the children of the world, who attach themselves to the goods of the earth. Who are the birds of the air? They are the religious, who have their cells for an asylum; but teachers of schools, whose vocation is to instruct the poor, after the example of Jesus Christ, should have no other inheritance upon earth than that of the Son of Man. Any other support than that of Providence becomes not the Christian Schools. This basis is solid and lasting, and they will remain unshaken if they have no other foundation."

Flesh and blood reveal not truths so rigid and so pure : what proves that they were inspired from on high, is, that he whom they interested, felt immediately their full force. Again the abbé had recourse to prayer, and found in this unfailing source of grace additional strength to accomplish his purpose ; which, as we learn from his own memorandums, was founded on the following reasons :—

1. " If I have resources against misery, I cannot preach to them an entire confidence in Providence.
2. " In remaining as I am, they will always find a specious pretext in my revenue to warrant their diffidence.
3. " A temptation, so plausible in appearance, cannot ultimately fail to produce the effects which the demon desires ; and the masters in part or in whole will desert the schools, and leave me without persons to conduct them.
4. " The rumour of their desertion will spread through the city ; and those who would have a vocation to become masters, will be attacked by the same temptations, even before they enter.
5. " The schools without permanent masters will fall, and the Institute will become buried under their ruins, never more to be re-established.
6. " Should none of these anticipations be realised, can I be superior of these masters without ceasing to be a canon ? are the two duties compatible ? I must renounce either.
7. " Now, in this choice, what should determine me ? The greater glory of God, the greater service of the church, my own perfection, and the salvation of souls. If I consult but such motives, so worthy of a priest of the Lord, I must resign my canonry to take upon me the

care of the schools, and to form masters capable of conducting them.

8. "I feel no further attraction in the vocation of a canon; and though I have entered upon it legitimately, it appears to me that God now calls me to renounce it. He has placed me in my present situation; but does he not show me another which merits a preference?"

Though the director of M. de la Salle consented to this new course of life, he still required of him to discharge the duties of canon. To set the matter at rest, the abbé went to Paris, that he might consult men whom he knew to possess enlightened minds and a high reputation. It was a useless journey: some indeed advised him to renounce all; but the greater number sought to dissuade him from that design. Ten months had thus passed, when, at length, by the interference of an enlightened ecclesiastic, his director acquiesced in the resolution.

The demon suggested to him many obstacles; yet he could not divert him from his determination. "We shall be poor; we shall want everything?—Well, the worst will be to ask alms; we shall do so if necessary. The men with whom I am to associate are difficult to be borne with; they will find it hard to conform themselves to the most perfect revealed maxims of Christianity? But it is not upon my own strength I rely; all my confidence is in God: he will succour me with his grace; and he well knows how, if it be for his glory, to give intelligence to those whom I shall form for his service. I will have much to suffer, and shall suffer without pity? my sufferings before God will be but the more meritorious: I should not desire to have them lessened. My constitution is delicate? we can often do more than we think. Under

all circumstances the Lord will sustain me; and if it be his wish that I should fall, shall not I be too happy to die in his service?"

Thus, being more confirmed than before in his pious design, by what should naturally have estranged him from it, he went to Paris in July, 1683, to resign his canonry to his archbishop, but could not obtain an audience of that prelate. While in Paris he visited the curé of St. Sulpice, M.<sup>r</sup>. de la Barnondière, to whom he communicated his intentions, and his purpose of settling in Paris.

The abbé returned to Rheims, and soon after had an interview with the archbishop, who opposed many difficulties to his design. Diffident of his own opinion, the abbé consulted some enlightened men, among whom was M. Philibert, a canon, and professor of theology, all of whom approved of his intended renunciation. Again he sought an interview with his archbishop, but was refused. At this refusal he went to cast himself at the feet of Jesus Christ, in the cathedral. There, prostrate, motionless, and absorbed in God, he was seen by one of those who had endeavoured to dissuade him from his generous purpose, who said to a bystander, with much apparent compassion, "Pray to God for this poor M. de la Salle, who is losing his wits." "You speak truly," replied the other; "he is losing, indeed, his worldly wisdom, that he may become replenished with the wisdom of God."

M. le Tellier, the archbishop, upon another application, admitted him to an audience. He asked the abbé if he consulted men of prudence and piety: the abbé replied in the affirmative, naming, among others, M. Philibert. This name had weight with the archbishop, who ordered him to be called in. In reply to the archbishop's

interrogatories, M. Philibert observed, that “M. de la Salle had a brother to whom he could resign his canonry.” The prelate answered immediately, “He may give it to whomsoever he pleases: I will receive his resignation.”

The abbé, without delay, drew up the formula of his resignation, and begged of his Grace to fill it with the name of M. Faubert, a young ecclesiastic of considerable merit. The archbishop and the citizens were astonished at this appointment, as M. de la Salle’s brother was worthy of the situation; but could not prevail on him to change the nomination he had made. The young abbé de la Salle was shortly after nominated to a canonry, by M. le Tellier, as restitution for the supposed injustice of his brother. Having completed the act of resignation, the abbé returned to his house, assembled his disciples, announced to them his success, and sung with them a *Te Deum*.

It was a question with him still, if he should sell his property, whether, in that event, he should give the amount to the poor, or found with it Christian Schools. Persons in his confidence recommended, that if he relinquished his patrimony, it should be in favour of his own community; that a species of justice required this preference: they urged the example of his friend, M. Roland, who founded the schools for females in Rheims. In this state of uncertainty, he thus addressed himself to the Divine Majesty: “My God, I know not whether I should, or should not, found schools with this property. Thy work, O Lord, is in question; it is for thee to decide. May that be done which is most agreeable to thee, and which will most promote thy glory. Grant me to know thy will, that I may execute it faithfully.”

God never rejects a prayer offered with simplicity.

After this prayer he found himself led to give all to the poor: The idea of receiving *all*, purely from the liberality of God, delighted him, and he determined to give to the poor what he possessed. This distribution drew on him once more the displeasure of his family. It is well known what plausible reasons relatives urge for opposing such works of charity. To hear *them*, it is a gross injustice to deprive the natural heirs of property, when even it is applied to relieve the suffering members of Jesus Christ: it is a cruel devotion, which heaven reprobates. But should a man become dissipated, involved in debt, or ruined by gambling, these relatives are totally silent, or excuse him by saying, that he could dispose of his property as he pleased: it is only when there is question of following the Gospel, that open opposition is given.

In that year, 1684, a great scarcity prevailed in France. This public calamity gave M. de la Salle an opportunity of exercising his charity and reducing himself to the indigence of those whom he relieved. He was not content to provide for the bodily necessities of the poor, but laboured likewise to make them good Christians. To observe a kind of justice in the distribution of the alms, he divided into three classes the poor whom he proposed to relieve. In the first he placed the children who frequented the schools; in the second, the bashful poor; the third was composed of the poor, known to be such.

At length, having nothing more to distribute, he saw himself reduced to the state to which he for a long time aspired. His disciples, though visibly protected by the hand of God, still feared for futurity. If they admired his generosity to the poor, they were displeased that he reserved nothing for themselves. They manifested to him their discontent; and the man of God accosted them

thus : " Let us, my dear brothers, take a retrospect of the sorrowful days that are passed, in which famine has displayed before us all its horrors, in the evils which it has inflicted on the poor, and in the destruction that it has brought on the fortunes of the rich. This city was tenanted almost entirely by paupers. They flocked hither from all parts to drag on the remains of a life, which the famine was shortly to terminate. During all this calamitous period, while the rich were not assured of being able to procure bread even for money, what have you wanted ? Thanks be to God, though we had no resources, we have seen those days pass without experiencing the want of necessaries. We owe nothing ; while opulent communities are ruined by loans and disadvantageous sales, which became necessary for their subsistence." This discourse called their attention to the miracles which divine Providence had wrought in their favour, and they learned to diffide no longer in the divine bounty.

## CHAP. III.

FROM the moment that M. de la Salle commenced to lead a life in common with his disciples, his table was extremely frugal. To overcome all kinds of repugnance, he fasted for some days; he was then enabled to eat whatever was placed before him; and often he arose from table without knowing what he had eaten. One day, the Brother who discharged the office of cook, served up, by mistake, some wormwood. The others, who knew not what it was, after tasting it, believed themselves poisoned, and ceased eating immediately, but M. de la Salle finished. They manifested to him their uneasiness about the poison which they said had been given them. It was examined and found to be wormwood; a circumstance which furnished them a long time with matter of recreation.

Notwithstanding the regulations which M. de la Salle had made for the masters dispersed in the different towns and cities; still they formed no regular society. They were differently dressed, because they still wore the clothes they had brought from home. Each conducted his school according to his own plan; and having contracted no engagement, they were free to retire at pleasure; consequently, the subordination which existed among them was imperfect. In a word, it was not yet a congregation marked by peculiar fixed rules and usages.

The time which the providence of God had designed for this, having now arrived, M. de la Salle undertook to give his little flock wherewith to render it a permanent

and useful body to the Church. To effect this, required much prudence. He was persuaded that he could not do better than to consult with his disciples : and with this view he convoked twelve of the principal Brothers from different places, and laid before them the subject for the consideration of which he had assembled them together. That they might receive the necessary light and grace for so great an undertaking, he proposed that they should enter upon a retreat. To this they consented, and they commenced it on the eve of the Ascension : it was to finish on Pentecost, but they prolonged it to Trinity Sunday.

He performed the retreat with them, and gave them the exercises which filled up the time. On the opening he addressed them thus : “ You will find in your new rules but what is ancient. Your hearts will recognise their own work in the book which shall be composed of these rules ; and the laws which it contains will appear amiable to you, because you will be your own legislators. You are arrived precisely at the crisis to which I wished to conduct you ; and as I am witness of your fervour and pious dispositions, I desire to co-operate with you, to fix your state, to confirm your vocation, to cement your union, and to commence the edifice of which you are the foundation-stones.” He then reminded them of what they themselves had proposed to him—to bind themselves by irrevocable vows. Before they would make these vows, he begged of them to weigh the matter deliberately. All entered into his views ; and after many prayers and penitential exercises, it was agreed that the points upon which they should deliberate were—1, the rules necessary to be established as fixed laws ; 2, the name which the masters should take thenceforward ; 3, their clothing ;

4, their food ; and 5, the vows by which they should bind themselves.

On the first article it was agreed that nothing should be yet decided ; the usages which were already introduced were preserved entire ; but it was not thought expedient to give them the force of laws. The name which the masters should take, was next agreed upon. They took one conformable to the end of their vocation ; that of " Brothers of the Christian Schools." With respect to the third article, they determined upon nothing. They still wore the clothes which they had brought with them ; a small collar only distinguished them from other seculars. What regarded the fourth article did not long occupy the assembly ; it referred to diet. All that could flatter sensuality was rejected unanimously ; for whether fish or flesh, it was to be of a simple, coarse kind, and apportioned to each by weight and measure, in a moderate quantity. Wine was tolerated ; but it may be judged that men so rigid in point of food, were very reserved in this particular. Upon the fifth article more deliberation was necessary. The Brothers, full of a holy ardour for perfection, were desirous of making perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. " We wish," said they, " to follow Jesus Christ, poor and stripped of everything upon Calvary. We have no property of which we could make to him the sacrifice ; is it not just that we should sacrifice to him the desire of ever having any in our possession ? Why not oblige ourselves to be for the love of God, what we are by the state in which he has permitted us to be born ? We know to what we bind ourselves by embracing voluntary poverty. Already have we been inured to its inconveniences. When we retired from the world into this house,

we took the resolution of loving God only, and chose him alone for our inheritance. We were likewise resolved to lead a life of celibacy; and now we are desirous to perfect that resolution by the vow of perpetual chastity, hoping thereby to obtain such succour from Heaven as will render us victorious over the flesh and its concupiscences. As to the vow of obedience, what should prevent us from making it? Was it not to obey that we came hither, and not to do our own will, the caprice and inconstancy of which we have hitherto but too much followed? There is prudence in fixing it timely, and taking away from it every hope of reducing us under its empire. The misfortune of those who have quitted our society is a lesson from which we should derive instruction. Let us bind ourselves then in such a manner, that we can no longer think of shamefully retracing our steps. Let us place ourselves under the happy necessity of being always united to the Lord."

M. de la Salle felt great joy at finding so much resolution in his disciples, and that their dispositions were so different from what they had been at a former period. Before binding themselves by irrevocable engagements, he requested them first to make trial of their strength, by making vows for three years only. To this they consented: M. de la Salle drew up the formula, and his twelve disciples pronounced them after him on Trinity Sunday. The practice of renewing this act every year on the same day existed until 1694.

The result showed how just were his apprehensions of having the Brothers bind themselves at first by perpetual vows: for when he made a convocation on the following year of the twelve, to renew the engagements they had made for three years, eight only were found at the cere-

mony. It was a subject of sorrow to the pious founder, to find the other four had so quickly changed their sentiments. He no longer counted on their perseverance, and they finally quitted the Institute.

At this assembly it was discussed what means should be adopted to give stability to the Institute. Some were of opinion that the Brothers should make perpetual vows of chastity ; others wished they should make in addition, the vow of obedience, at least for some specified period. M. de la Salle declared, that prudence seemed to require that young persons should not be suffered to make the former vow ; that it would be sufficient to bind them to the Institute by the vow of obedience, for one year; which vow they might annually renew, and that it could be seen, in the mean time, what progress they should make in virtue. So wise a counsel was unanimously received, and was acted upon for several years after.

It has been already stated, that no particular mode of dress had been as yet determined on. The severity of the winter subsequently to the first chapter of the order, gave occasion to make an arrangement on that head. The mayor of Rheims saw some of the Brothers badly clothed ; and meeting the pious founder, he represented to him the necessity of having the Brothers better clad ; that they were thus exposed to sickness, and consequently to the risk of being rendered unable to acquit themselves of their duties ; and that at least they ought to be provided with cloaks. Upon this the servant of God got some coarse black cloth, part of which he got made into cloaks and part into soutans, such as were worn in former times by ecclesiastics—closed in front by hooks and eyes. To this he added a collar of coarse linen, strong shoes, and a hat of ample dimensions. This dress is that which is

now worn by the Brothers. Time, which changes all things in its course, has yet made no alteration in the first simplicity of this clothing.

It can scarcely be imagined what outrages this drew upon M. de la Salle, and upon his disciples. The magistrates, who should have repressed these disorders, beheld them with indifference. God permitted this ingratitude, to exercise the virtue of his servants, and to increase their merits. Persons of piety requested of him to change the dress ; but he remained immovable : he even published a defence to justify his choice of it.

The fervour which reigned among the Brothers led several of them too far : they added many difficult practices to whatever was mortifying in their life of community. These austerities injured their health ; three fell victims to an indiscreet ardour. M. de la Salle was publicly charged with being inhuman, despotic, and unreasonable.

The death of three Brothers left in the Schools a blank which could not be filled up immediately. He could not entrust them to those who were inexperienced ; he was therefore obliged to take upon himself the management of a school. Clothed like his Brothers, he went to St. James's Schools. In going to these schools he could have avoided passing by the houses of some relatives ; still, without being in trouble at the insults it might bring, he always took the most direct course. He was publicly insulted by his relatives, and his ungrateful fellow-citizens. For the month that he continued to attend the schools, he bore their affronts with invincible patience.

Some of the Brothers not being fully qualified for their situation, were unable to command the respect of the children, who, perceiving the incapacity of their

teachers, became indocile and unruly. To re-establish order, the Brothers had recourse to severity, and often fell into faults in wishing to correct the scholars.

M. de la Salle knew the source of the evil; but he found a difficulty in applying a remedy. He exhorted his disciples to watch over themselves, to restrain their impatience, and to make themselves beloved by mildness: he endeavoured, in the mean time, to impart to them a thorough knowledge of the various branches which it would be necessary for them to teach the scholars.

His multiplied occupations prevented him from attending to prayer agreeably to his wishes: this was the cause why he became more inaccessible to externs. He had a certain number of virtuous friends, who came occasionally to visit him, not so much to console him for the persecutions which he suffered, as to be edified by his discourses. Though grateful for their kindness, he considered his time as very precious, and that it should be devoted to prayer. When he anticipated any of these visits, he had recourse to the innocent artifice of hiding himself in some obscure place, where he could not be found even by any of the Brothers. If taken by surprise on any of these occasions, he adored the providence of God, which seemed to derange the order of his devotion; and the visiter always returned, without suspecting for a moment, that he had exercised the abbé's patience. His manners were highly polished, but simple and natural, without affectation.

Once the Abbé of St. Thierry came to be an eye-witness of the reported change in his friend's appearance. Being ushered into his presence, he said to him with astonishment, "Is it thus a man of your character should be apparelled?" M. de la Salle replied to this

question only by a modest smile. The abbé returned charmed and edified at the interview. On several occasions M. de la Salle was obliged to receive the visits of many canons, his former confrères. He felt these visits so distracting, that he resolved to withdraw from earthly business, and to occupy himself solely with heavenly subjects. To effect this, he took refuge in one of those deserts which the Carmelites have attached to their houses. He passed a retreat there ; and so secretly did he go thither, that even the Brothers, except one, believed him to be still in the house. The Brother only who had charge of the community, was aware of his departure ; but in case any event required his presence, he named a respectable individual through whom letters might be addressed to him.

The two Brothers of Laon falling dangerously ill, he quitted his dear solitude, and arrived just as the last sad duties were being paid to one of them. The surviving Brother was soon restored, and the schools placed on a proper footing, upon which M. de la Salle returned. He travelled all night on foot, and arrived at Rheims very early next morning, to the agreeable surprise of the Brothers, who were greatly rejoiced at his speedy return.

The step which he took some days after his arrival, increased the idea which they had entertained of his sanctity. It was the result of deep reflection on the examples given us by Jesus Christ during his mortal course : for he meditated profoundly on the life of the Man-God, and made it the constant rule of his actions. Taught by the Gospel, that Jesus Christ practised obedience from his birth at Bethlehem to his death on Calvary, he endeavoured to exemplify in his person the most heroic practice of that virtue, by the resignation of

his office as superior in the very house of which he was the founder and the support. The Brothers increased daily ; his cares were consequently augmented. He had the consolation to see in many of his disciples, men whom his lessons and daily examples had rendered capable of conducting others. All the difficulty lay in obtaining the Brothers' consent. He assembled them, represented to them his great labours and cares, and concluded by begging that, as among them there were some eminently qualified to manage the affairs of the Institute, they would provide a substitute for him in the office of superior. His discourse was that of a man who was as anxious to place himself in abjection as others are to obtain elevation. He, however, assured them, that he wished not to do violence to their feelings ; and, that they might act with the more confidence, he conjured them to consult the Father of lights in a retreat of eight days. They agreed, and commenced it immediately ; during which he proposed to them the subjects of their meditations. Notwithstanding their repugnance to the measure, they were not proof against his pious artifices. They consented at length to elect one of themselves as superior ; and Brother Felix, a man of great wisdom, humility, and modesty, was chosen.

M. de la Salle was the first to greet the new superior ; the rest followed his example. Every morning and evening the ex-superior made his accusations. He swept the house, washed the utensils, and gave marks of respect to all the Brothers. He wished not to take even a single step without the permission of Brother Felix. The discipline and fervour of the house at this period, presented a spectacle worthy the admiration of angels.

While the Brothers were one day at recreation, after refection, one of them told Brother Superior, that

there was a part of the house filthy, and that the nuisance ought to be removed. Immediately M. de la Salle threw himself on his knees and offered his services. The superior refused ; but the humble servant of God believed that he was told the contrary; and hastened to execute the supposed injunction ; but on being reprimanded for having acted against orders, he acknowledged his error and begged a suitable penance.

For several days the change was not publicly known. Some persons who had business to do with the abbé, inquired for him at the door ; the porter announced to him their desire of an interview. At the moment that he was about to accost them, he felt some uneasiness at not having asked permission from the superior to receive the visit. He requested of the porter to bring him permission : it arrived, and he approached the persons who witnessed his embarrassment. “ How ! ” said they to him ; “ do *you* want permission to converse with those who come to see you ? Are not you the superior ? ” He replied with simplicity, that he had judged it necessary for the good of his soul to be subject like others to the orders of obedience ; that he had renounced the charge of superior, and that another was vested with the authority. After their departure, whether to exalt his humility, or to testify their displeasure at the change, they divulged it in the city.

This news having reached the ecclesiastical superiors, they determined to interpose their authority to reinstate him in office. They assembled the community, deposed Brother Felix, and nominated M. de la Salle in his room. The latter with reluctance resumed the government ; while the former with equal joy yielded up his pretensions. The Brothers saw the error into which they were betrayed

by the humility of their father. Shortly after, their docility was put to a severe trial. At recreation, in his absence, they usually entertained themselves on the eminent sanctity of their common father. Some spoke of his mortification and humility ; others of his recollection in prayer, his zeal, charity, love of religious discipline, &c. M. de la Salle happened to overhear some of these conversations ; he forbade the Brothers to speak among themselves of any living person in particular. This law became so difficult in practice, that in the course of time it was abrogated.

In proportion as he loved obedience, so did he desire to see it perfected in his children. A Brother committed a fault; the attentive superior remarked it, and imposed on the offender as penance, to eat alone in the middle of the refectory. The Brother appeared to obey with reluctance, and not to eat as well as usual ; M. de la Salle looking upon this want of submission as of great importance, rose immediately from his place, approached the Brother, took the spoon from his hands, eat the food, and represented to him the necessity of submitting to penances. The good Brother being ashamed of his indolency, to repair the scandal he had given, withdrew the vessel, but spilled its contents. His superior wished to complete the act of humility ; he gathered up conjointly with the Brother the liquid, took it with avidity, and then returned to his place. This may shock the delicacy of some ; but it is the spirit of simplicity recommended by the Gospel.

Though disappointed in his design of disengaging himself from office, he thought to have it accomplished by having Brother Felix ordained priest, as then his superiors could have no cause of displeasure. He be-

lieved even that a Brother invested with the priestly dignity would prove useful in every house of the Institute. He communicated his intentions to Brother Felix; without, however, declaring his motives. The good Brother learned from the abbé the elements of the Latin language, and went shortly after to the schools of the Canons Regular of St. Denis's at Rheims, to finish his studies. M. de la Salle intended to present him at the next ordination; but a fatal indisposition brought him to a premature grave.

Of all the misfortunes which befell M. de la Salle, he felt this the most sensibly. It not only induced him to abandon then his intention of having priests among the brotherhood; but so convinced was he of its being opposed to the will of God, that he made an express law, forbidding the Brothers to aspire to any ecclesiastical orders.

## CHAP. IV.

MANY who had witnessed the patience with which M. de la Salle endured the contradictions he had to sustain in the prosecution of his arduous undertaking, sought to place themselves under his spiritual direction. In this they had the example of the Duke de Mazarin, who never came to Rheims without consulting the abbé on matters of conscience. It was with much difficulty he yielded to many who solicited this favour. Among these was a nun, whom he already knew by reputation. He was aware her principal imperfection was, that after having made great sacrifices in quitting the world, she had a great attachment to superfluous trifles in religion, which retarded her advancement in perfection. Her heart was divided between God and what is called, the little conveniences of life—the trifling ornaments of a chamber. He proposed to her to bring from her cell and burn whatever she thought was not absolutely necessary according to God. This appeared to her harsh. She was even tempted to withdraw herself from his spiritual direction; however, as she had good dispositions, she ultimately consented, and consummated the sacrifice. It was on this hard condition that she purchased the advantage of being directed by a man, who had a just idea of what should be the detachment of the spouse of Jesus Christ. Though the pious director gave as little time as possible to his penitents, yet he found that it was more than the duty of his charge could permit: he therefore declined

the care of penitents ; and though tears and entreaties were employed, he continued firm in his resolution.

The world is a theatre, upon which the elect of God are to combat. M. de la Salle felt for some time a calm ; but it was deceitful, and was followed by a furious tempest. Notwithstanding the zeal and vigilance of the Brothers, the great majority of their scholars were yet without any settled principles of religion or decorum : they behaved at Mass with levity and irreverence. M. de la Salle recommended correction to be used towards these young profaners of the holy place, though always with prudence and moderation. Upon this recommendation being carried into effect, the parents of the children excited the whole populace to insult the Brothers and their Superior. The women, in particular, like so many furies, were unmeasured in their outrages. It is unaccountable how such scenes could have taken place in a polished city, and in the sight of the magistrates. Patience and meekness were the only arms he opposed to these long-continued persecutions.

In 1687 the principal Brother at Guise fell dangerously ill. The physicians, despairing of his recovery, discontinued their visits, and the good Brother having received the last sacraments, waited with resignation for death, only regretting that he could not enjoy the consolation of seeing his dear father before his dissolution. M. de la Salle, having been informed of his desire to see him, instantly set out on the journey, and though it was in the midst of summer, he wore his cloak and a rough hair shirt, which he never left off. On the road he prayed fervently, and said Mass on his arrival at Laon. The Brothers there procured a horse for him to perform the remainder of the journey ; a measure to which he con-

sented unwillingly. On his arrival at Guise, the sick Brother was in his extremity. He embraced his kind father, and immediately he found his strength renewed. After three or four days he was able to attend school.

No sooner had the abbé returned to Rheims, than he was solicited by several neighbouring curés to send Brothers to instruct the children of their respective parishes. He answered, that the fewness of his subjects would not allow him to comply with their request, but that he would do so with pleasure as soon as circumstances would permit. On receipt of this reply, the curés mutually agreed to seek out young men of good dispositions, whom they would send to be trained by M. de la Salle, and to whom, at their return, they might entrust the direction of their schools. These young men being arrived, M. de la Salle lodged them in a part of the house separately from the Brothers, one of whom he charged to watch over their conduct. He gave them a particular rule of life, and taught them everything necessary for their intended profession. Providence provided for their support, by the instrumentality of some pious persons. Animated with the best principles, and furnished with sufficient knowledge, they returned home, and showed what might be expected from the disciples of M. de la Salle.

About this period, M. de la Salle formed a new seminary for young persons who solicited admission to the Institute, but whose youth was an obstacle to their being admitted among the Brothers. He gave them a distinct lodging; he prescribed exercises for them suitable to their years and intentions, and placed them under the guidance of a pious and experienced Brother. Many of them in the course of time took the habit and became excellent subjects. These two seminaries were not, however, of many years' duration.

Zeal for the salvation of souls led M. de la Salle to think, that by establishing himself in Paris, his Institute would possess great advantages, and spread itself with more facility through France. It may be recollectcd, that he promised M. de la Barmondière, curé of St. Sulpice, some Brothers for the schools of that parish. He who had the direction of these schools, becoming weary of the labour of conducting them, solicited the curé to get some Brothers from Rheims. The curé applauded his zeal, and permitted him to write to their superior. He wrote; but the abbé fearing that the letter contained his own sentiments rather than those of the pastor, requested the opinion of the curé. M. de la Barmondière felt the justice of the request, and charged M. Baudran, who was shortly after his successor, to write to the abbé, and signify his concurrence and anxiety to have the Brothers in the parish.

M. de la Salle hesitating no longer, set out on his journey with two Brothers, and arrived in Paris on the 24th of February, 1688. M. de la Barmondière received them kindly. The new workmen commenced their labours immediately. They visited the schools, and found everything in the utmost disorder: some of the children were engaged at one thing, some at another, and such was the uproar that they were inaudible to each other. There was no fixed time for opening the school, dismissing the boys, nor for the other exercises of the day. There was carried on in the school a manufacture of wool, which, though it caused much noise and distraction, was highly valued by the curé. M. de la Salle divided the scholars into three classes, according to their proficiency, assigning a class to each of the Brothers and to the young man. News having been spread abroad that

masters were arrived, such crowds of children flocked to the schools, that one of the Brothers became ill from excessive fatigue. M. de la Salle took his place until he was restored to health. When the curé came to visit the schools, he examined the classes, and expressed his disapprobation of the manner in which that allotted to the young man was conducted: he therefore entrusted M. de la Salle with the sole direction of the school. Thus authorised, he established the same order in the school and in his community as at Rheims: nor did he fail in attending to the curé's favourite manufacture. But the former manager, actuated by jealousy, induced Rafrond, who carried on the manufacture, to complain to the curé that M. de la Salle's regulations interfered with its progress. The curé told Rafrond, if the regulations were not agreeable to him, he could withdraw. He did so, and the manufacture fell. Upon this, M. de la Salle got from Rheims a Brother who understood it, and placed it on a firmer basis than it had been before.

At a meeting of charitable ladies, held at the curé's house, the discarded manager charged M. de la Salle with conduct the most odious. The curé was duped like the rest, and charged M. Baudran to tell M. de la Salle, that he was at liberty to return to Rheims. To execute this commission was a severe trial on M. Baudran, who entertained the highest opinion of M. de la Salle's virtues. He performed the task, but begged of the abbé to take leave of the curé before his departure. On this occasion, as upon every other, the humble servant of God adored the divine Providence which permitted him to be thus afflicted; and agreeably to the suggestion, went to take his leave of the curé. This worthy pastor, without knowing by what secret influence, found himself changed

in his sentiments, and withdrew with M. Baudran for a few minutes, and on his return requested of the abbé not to depart, as he wished to reconsider his previous instructions.

New complaints being daily made by the author of these calumnies, the curé appointed the Abbé Janson to take cognisance of them. On several occasions, he unexpectedly visited the schools, and found such order and attention, that he made a favourable report to the curé : the teacher was therefore dismissed, and was charged with the care of the children in the parish choir.

The appointment delivered M. de la Salle for some time from an inveterate enemy. The peace which he now enjoyed gave him leisure to improve the system of the schools ; the results of which were so evident in the children, that the new curé of St. Sulpice solicited subjects for another school in the parish. It was accordingly established in *Rue du Bac*, at the commencement of the year 1690.

Exasperated at seeing this new establishment erected, the teacher above mentioned instigated the schoolmasters of Paris to oppose the founding of Christian Schools in that city, telling them, that the most serious injury would result to them from the progress of such an institution. The masters were not hard to be persuaded in this matter : they immediately combined together for their common interests, and took proceedings against the founder of the Christian Schools before the Great Chantry of the church of Paris, and obtained, in their favour, a sentence which proscribed these Schools as contrary to the privileges of the schoolmasters.

Though M. de la Salle had a just horror of lawsuits, he overcame his aversion in this instance by the reflection, that the interests of the poor were concerned. He consulted

pious and enlightened persons, and particularly his spiritual director ; all of whom unanimously agreed, that silence would be culpable on the occasion. It will appear a matter of surprise that M. Baudran took no part in this affair : perhaps he was restrained by reasons which, if known, would appear sufficiently satisfactory. To secure a happy result in this enterprise, M. de la Salle conducted the Brothers to a chapel dedicated under the name of *Notre Dame des Vertus*, which is celebrated for miracles wrought there, and is distant two leagues from Paris. After having said Mass, and communicated the Brothers, he passed three hours in prayer ; he then gave them a slender collation, but returned without partaking of a morsel himself. Next day he went to plead the cause of the poor, and spoke with so much unction and eloquence, that the sentence was reversed.

M. Baudran desired much to have the dress of the Brothers changed. It appeared at first very strange to the Parisians, but by degrees they became reconciled to it. M. de la Salle would not by any means consent to have the form changed ; he even published a defence of his reasons, and was supported by M. Tronson, superior of the Seminaries of St. Sulpice. M. Baudran could not relish this seeming obstinacy. Thus saints, unknowingly, reciprocally contribute to enhance each other's merits.

When M. de la Salle came to Paris, he brought with him two of the most talented of the Brothers, and a third to conduct the manufacture spoken of above : the number of scholars increasing, two others came also hither a short time after. Business pressed so heavily on the abbé, that he could not be at all times in the house ; good order therefore required that he should depute his auth-

rity to one of the Brothers in his absence. He appointed one of those lately arrived : the first two, who looked upon themselves as the founders of the house, became so offended, that one of them gave the dangerous example of desertion ; the other remained for some time longer, but only, it would appear, to make his superior suffer. He finished by sacrilegiously raising his hand to him, and at length returned into the world. Besides the scandal given by this transaction, M. de la Salle feared and felt the consequences. He had no Brothers on whom he could draw ; he was therefore obliged to attend the schools until God would send him suitable subjects.

His continual fatigues reduced him to a state of great debility ; yet, in a journey which he was obliged to make to Rheims, he travelled on foot. Being arrived at Rheims, he despatched the business on which he came, and was returning to Paris, when he became so ill, that he was obliged to take to bed. Of all the means which the Brothers used for his restoration, their prayers were the most efficacious. God heard their sighs : in three days he began to regain his strength, and in a very short time he was sufficiently well to revisit Paris.

Being still in a state of convalescence, the journey was too much for his strength, so that he got a relapse. The celebrated Dr. Helvetius visited him, and despaired of his recovery. When the charitable physician beheld him in a naked room, upon a poor bed, accompanied by his disciples in tears, he was moved with compassion. After mature consideration of his case, he saw but one remedy that could possibly cure him, though it might have the contrary effect. Before giving him this medicine, he recommended that the Holy Viaticum should be administered to him. M. Baudran performed this duty. He

came, accompanied by all the priests of the community of St. Sulpice, with lighted tapers. The procession was joined by a multitude of persons, who were attracted by devotion, or by the desire of witnessing the death of a saint. His countenance displayed the greatest tranquillity, and even beamed with holy joy, which marked his lively faith and confidence, and which proved to the spectators that death itself has delights for those who have lived well. The Brothers surrounded his bed bathed in tears ; their affliction moved the heart of the curé, who pledged himself to be their protector, and requested of M. de la Salle to give them his benediction before his death. The good father, scarcely able to speak, uttered only these words, which the tenderness of his heart dictated : “*I recommend to you great union and perfect obedience.*” He wished to bless them, but his arm was obliged to be supported and directed in its movement ; he then received his Creator, as a certain pledge of a happy eternity.

Each one retired with feelings of holy joy, mingled with sorrow. Never does the Christian religion appear so sublime and so consoling as at the death of those who have faithfully followed its maxims ; nor can any moment better display the happiness of dying in its bosom. Helvetius having administered the medicine, continued for some time between hope and fear as to the result ; at length it produced the desired effect, and the abbé’s health was perfectly re-established.

The Brother director, who governed the house in Rheims, committed some indiscretions, probably through inexperience, at which his subjects, who were not as yet sufficiently grounded in virtue, took great offence. The inconveniences which followed, appeared to M. de la

Salle so considerable, that he determined to establish a novitiate in Paris, to form the Brothers to the holy practices of their state. It was an undertaking of great difficulty, and was warmly opposed by M. Baudran : a scarcity then prevailed, and no assistance could be expected but from the public charities. Any other than M. de la Salle would, under the circumstances, have relinquished the project. He, however, felt ultimately the importance of the design, and persevered in it, counting always on divine Providence as his great resource. Reflecting that the Institute, the establishment of which had cost so many fatigues and crosses, was lately on the point of being annihilated, his heart burning with zeal for his neighbour, became oppressed. To prevent such a disaster, he associated with him two Brothers, whom he deemed the most capable of carrying on the great work after his death. The following is the formula of a vow which he, together with his new associates, made of using their endeavours to perpetuate the Institute :—

“ Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, prostrate in profound respect before your infinite and adorable Majesty, we consecrate ourselves entirely to you, to procure by all our power, and all our care, the establishment of Christian Schools, in the manner which shall appear to us most agreeable to you, and most advantageous to the society. For this purpose, I, John B. de la Salle, Priest ; I, Nicholas Viast ; and I, Gabriel Drolin, henceforward, until the last survivor, or the complete establishment of that society, make vow of association and union, to procure and maintain the said establishment, without liberty to swerve, even though there should remain but three in the society, or that we should be obliged to ask alms, and live on bread only. In per-

formance of this, we promise to do unanimously, and with common consent, what we shall believe in conscience, without being swayed by any human considerations, to be for the good of the Society.—November 21st, 1691."

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## CHAP. V.

AFTER this vow, the pious founder felt new confidence, and more ardour to advance the project of the novitiate. To prevent any contradictions that might arise, he obtained the approbation of M. Harlay, then archbishop of Paris. The next step was to procure a suitable house. He found one at Vaugirard, a village almost adjoining the city. God, in his mercy, seemingly wished that this place, then known by its licentiousness, should have a daily example of what the spirit of penance and mortification could inspire. The city residence of the Brothers being very unhealthy, the abbé, ever solicitous to provide for their wants, removed them to Vaugirard, delighted at having it in his power to better their condition.

When the time of vacation approached, he wrote to the Brothers in the country to assemble in Paris. He lodged them at Vaugirard, and made them enter on a retreat, for which he gave them suitable exercises. The retreat being ended, he told them, that those who were but one or two years in the society were not sufficiently qualified for their state ; that more time was requisite to form them ; that

the more ancient, whose virtue was proved, might return to resume their functions, and that they would be aided by the masters destined for the country, who were still at Rheims. The ancient Brothers departed, with orders to return each year, at the same season, to perform the spiritual exercises. The new Brothers, who remained at Vaugirard, passed a year there in all the practices of an interior and mortified life.

The happy success of such a novitiate inspired him with the design of forming it on the plan of novitiates in religious orders, for all those who would enter the Institute. Great numbers presented themselves from the country. Like the Son of God, he asked those who wished to be his disciples, if they desired to become perfect : if they expressed a strong desire of becoming perfect, he admitted them—a short time would prove its sincerity.

What is read of the ancient solitaries concerning austerity and mortifications, can scarcely surpass the practices of the novices at Vaugirard. They inhabited a house without furniture, without a window that could be closed ; the rooms were open to the winds, to rain, sleet, and snow ; they had no other beds than badly made-up palliasses. Two quilts only were in the house ; one for the sick ; the other, which was destined for M. de la Salle, was never worn by him. The house had neither fire nor kitchen : it was at Rue du Bac that food was prepared, and this consisted only of some remains given by the charitable community of St. Sulpice. Scarcity prevailed at the same time at Paris, where the misery was excessive. When it is considered, that it was during the calamity that M. de la Salle resolved to found the novitiate, it is not a matter of surprise that it should have met with op-

position from M. Baudran. And yet, though the dress of the novices announced extreme poverty, and though they practised long prayers, fasts, and watching, they were, notwithstanding, content and happy.

The Brothers at Rheims, Laon, Guise, and Rethel, came to the novitiate, where, after ten days' retreat, they performed for one month the same exercises as the novices ; and being thus renewed in the spirit of their vocation, they returned, making the journey as they came, on foot. This practice was observed for the seven years which the novitiate lasted at Vaugirard.

It was on the occasion of these journeys that M. de la Salle formed a close intimacy with a nobleman of singular piety, the Count du Charmel. This nobleman was accustomed to pass a part of the year in the vicinity of Vaugirard ; yet he had not heard of the abbé, a circumstance which should give a high idea of the retired life led by the servant of God. Three of the brothers being on their way, in the month of September, to make their retreat, arrived at night in a country parish, and claimed the hospitality of the curé. He was edified by their humble and modest demeanour, and astonished at their dress. He communicated the news to the lord of the place, and had them introduced to the Chateau du Charmel. The count questioned them on their manner of living and the end of their Institute. He was so pleased with their replies, that he solicited them to beg of their superior to direct by Charmel, all the Brothers who should be going to Champagne.

After their departure, delighted with what he saw, he reproached himself with having neglected to cultivate an intimacy with the founder of so holy a Society. He remedied this neglect on his first visit to Paris, for he went

direct to the novitiate of Vaugirard, and became acquainted with the abbé. He repewed the kind invitations, or rather commands, to have the Brothers, on their way to Champagne, pass by Charmel.

The practice of the count was to go yearly to La Trappe, that he might receive edification from the members, but he avowed that he had seen nothing there more edifying than he then witnessed; and to testify his approbation of the observances of the house, and his affection for the exalted personage whose spirit appeared to animate all the members of the community, he made him a present of a splendid altar-piece and chasuble. The humble superior thanked Providence for having procured for the Institute so virtuous, powerful, and generous a protector. The mutual friendship of these two servants of God terminated only with their death.

In the times of persecution above mentioned, M. de la Salle redoubled his usual austeries. Once having passed the night in prayer, and being no longer able to resist sleep, he lay on wet mortar. At first, he was not aware of the consequences; but in some years after he found that it brought on rheumatism. The pain was violent and without intermission, except on Sundays and festivals. This, doubtless, was a special favour that he asked. On these days he was able to immolate the *Spotless Lamb*, and distribute it to his children. The remedy which he applied was rather singular. He stretched himself on chairs, as if on a gridiron; two red hot chafing-dishes were placed under him, and in these was put burning gin, the flames of which were directed to the part affected. He suffered this remedy many days in succession, with a patience almost unexampled, and without a murmur, except, "My God! God be praised!". So

great was the heat, that even the chairs upon which he was laid became too hot to admit the hand for a single moment. In great part the remedy had the desired effect; enough, however, remained to exercise the continual patience of this lover of suffering.

Happy and sanctified days passed in this poor house of Vaugirard; nor did the tumult of the adjoining great city disturb his repose. The famine, which reached its height towards the end of 1693, obliged him to abandon it for some time, and transfer the novitiate and community to the house attached to the School of St. Sulpice; otherwise he would have exposed himself and the community to die of hunger. Poverty, which acknowledges no law, had led a pauper to force away from a Brother, the little provision which he was taking to the house of Vaugirard: the danger of a similar recurrence increased daily: the famished poor associated in the streets and used violence to the passengers. They undoubtedly would have laid hands on the portion which came at a certain hour, and the Brothers would be without a resource.

Bread became unprecedently dear. M. Baudran, by his situation, was obliged to provide for his parochial poor, who increased so rapidly, that he was unable to pay the 500 livres which he promised the Brothers yearly. This had been M. de la Salle's last and only resource. In a very short time the Brothers were reduced to live on boiled herbs, and these even were on the eve of being exhausted. At this some began to murmur, but were excited to confidence in the merciful providence of God by their superior, who, penetrated with the spirit of faith, addressed them thus: " My dear children, be not diffident; say not, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall clothe us? for it is thus the pagans speak. Your Heavenly Father

knows you want all these things." They were for some days in this extremity. At length *four sous* only were left, and nothing remained in the house to be sold. He gave these to the procurator to purchase vegetables, offering at the same time his fervent prayers to the Father of mercy to take pity on his family.

The Brother, on his way to the market, passing near the house of a lady at which a crowd of poor waited for alms, he mixed in the throng. When the lady came to distribute the alms, she remarked this Brother by his dress: she requested him to enter—she asked him, "Why do I see you among these poor creatures? Do you thus feel the rigours of this famine? Are you not the principal objects of M. Baudran's care?" In reply, the Brother detailed the wants of his community, and concluded by saying, that there remained but four sous, with which he had been going to buy vegetables, when seeing a concourse about her door, he took the liberty of placing himself among them in order to share, if possible, in the alms which they expected. The charitable lady, moved at this simple and ingenuous recital, said to the Brother, "Go in peace; I will give orders that you want nothing." She immediately went to the curé; she expressed to him her surprise that he neglected to relieve men who were so useful to the parish, and who were reduced to the last extremity. M. Baudran avowed that he knew the frightful misery of the Brothers; but that he could not extend relief to all the distressed; and added, that from the melancholy circumstances in which all persons were placed, the Brothers should resign themselves to suffer. "But," replied the lady, "it is one thing to suffer, and another thing to be in absolute want. Some efforts must be made for them."

As this lady was very rich and one of the best resources which the curé had, he was obliged to accede. He sent some money to M. de la Salle, who received it, attributing the donation to God's special protection.

In the month of January, 1694, the famine increased still greater; the means of M. Baudran diminished as the poor became more numerous. Though he was affectionately attached to the Brothers, they were to him in these times of scarcity as strangers: he was apparently persuaded that he owed the first attention to his natural parishioners. M. de la Salle had recourse to his ordinary refuge, Jesus Christ crucified. He cast himself at his feet; he conjured him to grant them relief. He felt inspired to go to the curé: he went, and found him in good dispositions, having just received a large sum from the king for the relief of the parishioners. The curé embraced M. de la Salle with the greatest tenderness, acknowledged the evils that he suffered, and gave him 200 livres, with a promise of 200 more in a few days. This promise was punctually fulfilled. They, however, lasted but a short time. Again he solicited the curé; and, contrary to his expectations, was courteously and generously responded to: the curé, on taking leave, handed him an order on a baker to furnish the community weekly with a certain quantity of bread. After some time the curé changed this order to a sum of 100 livres per month, as an equivalent, to which he bound himself for one year. Bread was distributed throughout to the Brothers by weight, and with the strictest economy; still the expense of this moderate distribution amounted monthly to 150 livres. At length, food having on a sudden become cheap, the good father was relieved from his embarrassment.

M. Baudran considered M. de la Salle obstinate on

some points ; the community suffered by the misunderstanding. The yearly rent of the house occupied by the Brothers, was 700 livres, which were paid by the curé. The time expired, and the landlord gave notice either to renew the agreement or seek a dwelling elsewhere. M. Baudran wished to engage a house at a lower rent, but which was neither so suitable nor so convenient. M. de la Salle would not consent ; he said that he would prefer paying the 700 livres himself. It was a heavy charge for the servant of God ; however, Providence in a short time furnished him with means of defraying it.

At length the famine ceased, and abundance succeeded. The community commenced their labours in Paris, and met with liberal support. But the charms of the solitude at Vaugirard recalled the holy man, with six novices, thither to resume their first exercises. He profited of the repose he there found, to execute a design which he had in view, that of drawing up rules for the Institute ; those observed in the houses had not the force of a law, and were maintained by fervour rather than by authority. Following all the holy founders of orders who preceded him, he first had recourse to prayer : he implored the light of the Holy Ghost ; he supplicated his powerful protectress, the Mother of God, to obtain for him a particular assistance from heaven ; he fasted and macerated his body, and then drew up the rules in writing. Before publishing them, he wished that they should have the approbation of those whom they were to bind. As soon as possible, he assembled all the ancient Brothers ; he put into their hands his collection, declaring his wish to be, that without any complaisance to him, they should speak freely upon what they believed before God should be reformed. His intention was only to impose a yoke

that would be borne freely. The new Brothers had also the liberty of giving their opinions. On this occasion, the Brothers proceeded with their usual simplicity. Nearly all had representations which they had designed to make, but when requested to speak, they were so full of the idea that the rules were inspired by the spirit of God, that they had not strength to object. Some less fervent Brothers murmured at the rigidity of the rules. He replied, "Take them to three of the most enlightened and virtuous superiors of communities in Paris ; I submit to their judgment, and I will subscribe voluntarily to all the changes and additions which they shall deem necessary." He did the same on subjects of recreation. At first he thought to cut off all recreation ; but discovered, that in this particular, he was opposed to the most interior founders of religious orders. That his decrees should be such as wisdom and prudence would dictate, he consulted God by a retreat of eight days. The following was the result :—

1. The Brothers were not to speak at recreation until they had at first saluted the Brother director, and received from him permission to speak.
2. They were not to speak of any individual but in terms of praise.
3. They were not to speak of anything frivolous, or of what could only serve to gratify an idle curiosity.
4. Silence was to be observed when they separated after recreation.
5. Levity and jesting were to be avoided.
6. Loud talk and laughter were prohibited.
7. They were neither to contradict nor to correct each other ; this being reserved to the Brother director.
8. In fine, they were to discourse on such matters only

as might lead to the love of God and to the practice of virtue.

M. de la Salle composed several very useful works for the schools :—“ Christian Politeness ;” “ Instructions on the Sacrifice of the Mass, and the manner of assisting thereat ;” “ Instructions on Penance and the Eucharist ;” several catechisms, meditations, and other works of piety for the use of his disciples.

Persuaded, that without making perpetual vows, the Institute would not last long, he thus addressed his disciples : “ Shall we continue to bind ourselves to God, only as hirelings bind themselves to their master ? They are free to change at the end of their year’s servitude ; or, if they wish to continue, they must each year renew their contract. Their interest alone determines them. The master whom they serve cannot count upon them beyond the stipulated time ; because he possesses not the hearts of such mercenaries. Is there not something similar in our manner of serving God, since we engage ourselves to him but for a time, after the expiration of which we regain our liberty ? But, unfortunately, in regaining it, we find ourselves with all our evil inclinations at the risk of indulging them. If we had once sacrificed in good earnest this liberty which might prove destructive to us, the necessity of persevering in our holy state would confirm our determination of serving God, and of giving him the unreserved possession of our hearts.”

Nothing could give the abbé more pleasure than the anxiety of his children to bind themselves, and for ever. It being a matter of great importance, he deferred the execution of it to prove their sincerity. He requested the ancient Brothers in the provinces to consult the Lord, and assemble in Paris at Pentecost. They arrived at the

appointed time, to the number of twelve. He entered with them into a retreat, and confined all his exhortations to the subject of the vows. He showed them that the perpetuity of these vows would enhance their merit before God; but he also represented to them that precipitation might expose them to useless and fatal regrets—perhaps to horrible sacrileges; or at least to seeking dispensations, which would lead those who obtained them to heart-rending inquietudes on the validity of the reasons upon which they were obtained. These instructions had the desired effect; their unanimous opinion was, that perpetual vows should not yet be made, except those of obedience, and stability in the Institute. On Trinity Sunday, the day on which the retreat finished, he and his twelve disciples pronounced these vows of obedience to the body, as well as to the superior of the society, and of perseverance during life in the same society. The humble superior thinking the present a favourable opportunity of procuring the election of a superior in his stead, addressed the assembled Brothers in the following terms:—" Since Providence has united you together by perpetual vows, it would be wise to adopt the means of rendering this union so strong, and so solid, that it cannot be shaken either by the devil or the world. Now, the first of these means is, to place in God alone your confidence, recollecting, that those who lean upon man are supported by a rotten reed, which, in breaking under the hand, pierces it, as is expressed in the holy Scriptures. You should look upon me but as a poor priest, without influence, or the means to support you. It is the greatest folly to count on a mortal man, and to rest your hopes on an arm of flesh. You have not forgotten that it is but three years since I escaped from the gates of death.

I may return to them in three days ; and in this case you would be obliged to elect another superior ; it is better to anticipate than await this necessity. Strong reasons require that you should make this choice quickly. Delay may be destructive to the society, because death may outstrip the term of it.

“ The second efficacious means to render your union indissoluble is, to elect a superior who is not a priest. For the sacerdotal character would place between you and your superior a great disparity ; it would weaken your union ; and subjects not well united to *him* who governs, form a body, which, having the head and the members badly joined, remains without health and without vigour. For this reason it is time—it is high time to take from me the government of the Brothers. If you wait, you may have reason to repent. The first experience which you will have of my neglected advice, if I happen to die, shall be to see as many superiors as there shall be schools. This diversity of pastors will infallibly divide the flock ; the sheep, thus separated, will remain without any union among themselves, and without subordination to a common pastor. Having no longer the same direction, you will cease to have the same spirit, the same heart, and the same sentiments. The separated bands, no longer forming the same society, will change views, doctrine, manners, habits, and shortly destruction will succeed their division ; because the detached Brothers can be replaced but by men of different desires and talents ; shortly you will see mercenaries preside over the schools, which, ceasing to be gratuitous, may cease also to be Christian, and consequently, be unfit for the education of poor children.

“ Suppose even, if you wish, that the different local

ecclesiastical superiors agree together to give you, after my death, a priest as superior, would he be qualified to conduct you ? would he have the spirit of your community ? would he follow your rules and conform to your manner of life ? could he and you mutually sympathise with each other ? would you be disposed to give him your confidence ? would he live among you as one of yourselves ? Suppose him even to be a saint, full of the spirit of God, of zeal for his neighbour, and of charity and tenderness for you, would he be suitable to govern you, not having been brought up with you, nor to the practice of the same observances ? Further, his dignity placing between him and you a wide disparity, and being ignorant of your maxims and practices, how would you and he form together but one heart and one soul ? With respect to your rules, might he not wish to change them ? In a word, would he be qualified to conduct you, who would require much time to obtain the necessary experience to govern you according to the spirit of your Institute ? In truth, it could be effected only by a miracle ; and do you expect this miracle ? If you expect it not, why do you defer taking away the office of superior from a priest, and making a law, never to place it in the hands of any person vested with that dignity ? ”

M. de la Salle flattered himself that he had, by this discourse, triumphed over the simplicity of the Brothers : they were, however, proof against this effort of his eloquent humility, remembering how it had, on a similar occasion, surprised them into an act of which they afterwards repented. When he requested of them to commence an election, they complied with much reluctance ; and when the suffrages were declared, he found himself confirmed in the office of superior. He then represented

to them his past labours, the necessity he had for repose ; he reproached them tenderly, and begged of them to consult God in prayer for half an hour, and proceed to a new election. They obeyed, but without any alteration of sentiment, so that the result was the same as before. At this he was tempted to become angry ; but they freely represented to him that he was not at liberty to resist the will of God, so clearly manifested to him in his election, and refused to go into a third scrutiny. Resigning himself to the will of heaven, he only requested that the Brothers, in signing the act of his election, should add to it a formal exclusion of all persons in holy orders to govern the Institute. The twelve Brothers signed the following act :—

“ We, the undersigned, being associated with Rev. John B. de la Salle, priest, to hold together gratuitous schools, by the vows which we made on yesterday, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, acknowledge that, in consequence of these vows, and of the obligations which we have contracted by them, we have chosen for superior J. B. de la Salle, whom we promise to obey with an entire submission, as well as those whom he shall appoint as superiors. We declare also, that the present election binds not as a precedent in future ; our intention being, that after M. de la Salle, and for evermore, there shall not be received among us, nor chosen for superior, any person who may be a priest, or who has received holy orders ; that we will not have, and that we will not admit, any superior who is not associated with us, and has not made vows like all the Brothers.

“ NICHOLAS VIAST,  
“ GABRIEL DROLIN, &c.

“ Vaugirard, 7th June, 1694.”

## CHAP. VI.

AT this period, many bishops applied for Brothers to conduct schools in their dioceses. The superior requested a little time to form his disciples properly ; the leisure which he now enjoyed afforded him the opportunity of doing so. M. Francis de Harlay had just died, and was succeeded in the archbishopric of Paris by M. Louis Anthony de Noailles, previously bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne. The new archbishop applied strenuously to the reformation of abuses, of which one was the multitude of domestic chapels, all of which he placed indiscriminately under an interdict. This general proscription embarrassed M. de la Salle, who, as it has been already observed, had no other place to celebrate Mass and give the Holy Communion to his disciples, than the chapel of a private individual, residing near the novitiate. The parochial chapel was at a great distance, in going to which, at an early hour, they had to encounter the scandalous comportment of city libertines, a circumstance which might prove fatal to their innocence. Impressed with these considerations, M. de la Salle waited on the archbishop to obtain permission for a chapel in his community. He received the abbé in the kindest and most gracious manner, and not only gave the required permission, but he confirmed in writing the verbal permission which M. de Harlay had given him, to establish a community in Paris. To these privileges he added that of *always* exercising *all* the powers of the sacred ministry. The holy priest

returned overwhelmed with so many marks of kindness and affection. In a short time the chapel was erected, the altar completed, and one of the grand vicars came to perform the ceremony of consecration.

Though the curé of the parish was the particular friend of M. de la Salle, yet he felt displeased that he and his community would not attend the church to assist at the divine office. He treated them and their superior rather harshly—as men who wished to withdraw themselves from the authority of their pastor, and whose example might prove pernicious. M. de la Salle contented him in some degree, by going with his novices to the parochial church on the first Thursday of every month, to celebrate the solemn Mass of the Holy Sacrament. M. de la Salle attended regularly at Easter also, and on the feast of St. Lambert, the patron of Vaugirard.

While God permitted M. de la Salle to be thus thwarted in his enterprises by the contradictions of men from whom he should expect protection and support, the reputation of his Institute spread abroad. Many postulants solicited admission: though poverty continued to be all his riches, he had not fortitude to refuse those applicants. In a very short time the house became insufficient for their accommodation, he was therefore necessitated to look out for one more extensive and commodious. As he passed one day through the *Rue Vaugirard*, he beheld a large and beautiful house, seemingly for some time abandoned. It had been occupied by the nuns of *Notre Dame des Vertus*, and was retired and well enclosed: 1600 livres was the yearly rent. M. Baudran having been dissatisfied at the rent of the former establishment, co-operation from him on the present occasion could not be expected.

The resignation of his parish, which M. Baudran made shortly after in favour of M. de la Cheztardie, was a fortunate event for the Institute under the present circumstances. M. de la Cheztardie proved himself always one of its most zealous protectors. When the abbé waited on him to congratulate him on his appointment, he mentioned the new establishment. M. de la Cheztardie, with kindness, said to the abbé, " You have great difficulty to live; how, then, will you be able to pay so high a rent?" He increased by 50 livres the annual salary of each Brother. The abbé and the community were immediately transferred to the new establishment. Some furniture became necessary; he had nothing to purchase it; by the solicitations of the curé, Madame Voisin, a virtuous and rich lady, gave 400 livres, with a promise of such a sum yearly. The kind curé found the community still badly supplied—again he represented to her their wants: she gave a sum of 7,000 livres. According to the world, the Brothers had never been so rich; their superior taught them to rely on the care of Providence, and to offer their prayers continually for their benefactors. By these sums the novices were better lodged; but the food and exercises of mortification remained as before. A suitable chapel was also fitted up; one of the grand vicars came to dedicate it under the invocation of St. Cassian, Martyr. M. de la Salle selected this saint for a patron, because he had been a martyr by his charity for the instruction of children, and that he might be a powerful intercessor for the Brothers, and a model for their imitation. M. de la Cheztardie showed a paternal kindness for the Brothers. He established a third school in the parish of St. Sulpice, and furnished the support of four additional Brothers.

The schoolmasters of Paris, ever attentive to the progress of the Institute, renewed their clamours against the Brothers, and obtained a provisional sentence, by virtue of which they seized upon whatever was to be found in the schools of St. Sulpice. M. de la Salle being informed of the matter, hastened to the schools, and found them removing the seats. Without losing any of his self-possession, he said to his enemies, " Hold ; take me also." They replied, that the sentence concerned not him, but the Brothers. In fine, they cited the Brothers, and the schools were shut up for the three months during which the lawsuit lasted. M. de la Salle fell sick at this time ; fortunately his illness was not of long duration, so that he was able to plead the cause of the poor, and was forcibly supported by M. de la Cheztardie. The whole drift of the charge brought against the Brothers was, that, though they made profession of teaching gratuitously, they derived, notwithstanding, considerable emoluments from their schools. This gross calumny was denied in whole and in part by the Brothers ; their superior declared if this charge could be substantiated, he and they were ready to sign their own condemnation. To this challenge no reply could be made : the judge awarded, that the furniture taken out of the schools should be restored, and that the Brothers might resume their functions ; a sentence which was received by the people with acclamations of joy, and by none with greater satisfaction than by M. de la Cheztardie, who frequently visited the schools, accompanied by Madame Voisin. They excited the emulation of the children by their liberality. He would say to the zealous superior, " If all these children were not assembled here now, where would they be found but in the streets, wrangling, insulting the passengers, and at their

expense becoming adepts in all vices?" He often questioned them on the mysteries of our holy religion, and was charmed with the promptitude and clearness with which they replied. On the first Saturday of each month, the different schools came in procession to hear the Solemn Mass of the Blessed Virgin. Madame Voisin took great delight in this imposing scene, which drew from the spectators a thousand benedictions upon the Brothers and the founder.

A holy emulation was thus excited in the curé of St. Hippolytus, to have a school like that of St. Sulpice. It was accordingly established ; and the result was so beneficial to the parish, that the zealous curé desired to have some Brothers sent to the country parts, where the children were in a state of gross ignorance. To this the founder objected ; but he proposed that well disposed young men from these parts should, as at Rheims, come and be trained under his superintendence. The curé consented, and promised to procure the necessary funds. One individual gave a house ; an ecclesiastic gave 800 livres as a salary ; and these were sufficient to commence the work. In a short time the young men arrived. M. de la Salle placed at their head one of the most experienced Brothers : he prescribed them the same rules as he laid down for the young men at Rheims, and taught them all that was necessary for becoming efficient instructors.

The severity of the director he left at Rheims caused the ruin of the first establishment of this kind ; the perfidy of him who was placed over that of St. Hippolytus caused the ruin of the second. So charmed was the curé with the new seminary, that he contemplated the erection of another, when he was attacked with the sickness of which

he died. As the house was not authorised by letters patent, he left the director his universal legatee. He was one of those who engaged himself by vow with M. de la Salle, to uphold the Institute to his latest breath. No sooner did the generous curé close his eyes in death, than this wretched man appropriated to himself the entire property. M. de la Salle having been informed of the death of the curé, came to this Brother to make arrangements respecting the intention of the testator; but was insolently told that his interference was unsolicited—to withdraw immediately, and never more to make his appearance. It is easier to conceive than express the sentiments of the abbé at that moment. The ecclesiastic who had promised the 800 livres in support of the house, on hearing of the perfidiousness of the director, retracted his promise. The wretched man then banished the Brothers who conducted the school with him, and quitted the Institute. Though this unfortunate occurrence was so well calculated to lower the Brothers in the estimation of the people, and to deprive them of their confidence, yet the holy superior consoled himself by the reflection, that the interests of the society were in the hands of God, and resumed his wonted tranquillity.

Few are unacquainted with the misfortunes of James the second, king of England, who was followed into France by numbers of Catholics, many of whom were pennyless, and exposed to the greatest misery. James felt for them like a father; yet he was unable to relieve all their wants. The memory of this ill-fated monarch shall be dear to religion, whatever might have been his political errors. In particular, he had much at heart the Christian education of fifty Irish boys, whom he recommended warmly to the archbishop of Paris. This pre-

late thought immediately of M. de la Salle's establishment, and asked admission for them and obtained it. This was an honourable mark of confidence in the humble superior, and a glorious testimony to the regularity of his community. Through respect for the persons who confided to him these exiles, he charged himself in a great measure with their education, and in a short time they were found capable of filling with honour the situations for which they had been destined. His ex-majesty, accompanied by the archbishop, visited them, and testified to M. de la Salle the satisfaction which he felt at his kindness and attention.

Among the many prelates who solicited Brothers from M. de la Salle, was M. Godet des Marais, bishop of Chârtres, and formerly known to the founder at the Seminary of St. Sulpice. All the curés of Chârtres, animated with the same zeal, besought him not to delay to send them. Six Brothers were granted in 1699, whom the pious bishop received with gratitude. In a short time the schools became crowded, and the school-masters of Chârtres, like those of the capital, seemed disposed to oppose the Brothers, but they dared not during the lifetime of the bishop. After his death they obtained a sentence, that the Brothers should receive into their schools the children only of those whose names were inscribed in the list of paupers. It may be easily imagined what injury this law inflicted on many inhabitants. How many poor families in every town, though unable to pay for the education of their children, were not quite reduced to a state of mendicancy! In a great measure the schools of Chârtres were destroyed by this regulation.

In the following year, 1700, schools were opened in

Calais. M. Ponthon, who had just then become curé of that town, by the resignation of his uncle, happened to see in the church of St. Sulpice the scholars and the Brothers at Mass; and so pleased was he, that he desired most ardently to procure the same advantage for his parish. He gave so high a description of the Brothers in his letter, that it excited in the venerable old man, his uncle, a holy impatience to have them before his death. The magistrates entered into the project. The duke de Bethune, governor of Calais, a nobleman of distinguished piety, declared himself protector of the Brothers. Two arrived, and got a part of what was called the *college*. In a short time, they received as a tribute to their services, the entire of that establishment. The funds were not sufficient; the magistrates obtained a royal grant from Lewis XIV of 450 livres, and through the duke de Bethune, a like sum in 1702.

*Court Gain* is a large district, separated from Calais at the sea-side, inhabited by sailors of rude manners, and ignorant of the principles of religion; the children, of course, were, in these respects, from infancy no better off. M. Le Prince, vicar of this place, seeing the result of the Brothers' labours, desired most anxiously to have some of them for his district. He proposed his design to the president Thosse. They conferred with the magistrates, who wrote a joint letter to M. Pontchartrain, representing to him how useful two Brothers would be to instruct the sailors' children. The king granted their request, and ordered M. Bignons, then governor of Picardy, to make all necessary arrangements for the support of two Brothers. The school was opened in 1705. The inhabitants, not content with giving the Brothers the means of a decent subsistence, procured

for them an annual salary of 900 livres, levied by an impost on the dues of the town. There is no place, perhaps, where the Brothers have at all times been so beloved and esteemed as at Calais.

Coeval with this time, M. de la Salle had the consolation to see attached to the novitiate, a Sunday school, which was an unequivocal proof of his zeal, and that of M. de la Cheztardie. That pastor, ingenious to devise means of sanctifying his flock, proposed to the founder to open a school on Sundays and holydays, for apprentices and others, whose occupations could not allow them to attend on working days. Sundays and festivals being the only days which they could devote to the duties of religion, they spent these days rather in gambling and drinking. The design was worthy of the man whose exalted qualities had induced the king to nominate him to the see of Poitiers, but whose humility made him modestly decline its acceptance. It now only remained to attract the intended pupils. To effect this, it was agreed that they should be taught orthography, writing, arithmetic, geometry, and architectural drawing. The schools were opened in 1709.

Great numbers flocked to the schools. Pupils were received up to the age of twenty ; they were classed according to their proficiency or intended study, to which three hours were devoted ; this was followed by catechism, and an exhortation from one of the Brothers. It cannot be imagined what good these schools produced ; a total change in the manners and morals of these young lads was the consequence.

The Brothers whom M. de la Salle had selected for these schools, placing too high a value on their acquirements, became indocile and proud ; and formed the pro-

ject of amassing a fortune ; they returned into the world, heedless of the scandal of their apostacy, or the injustice they had done the Institute to which they had engaged their services. M. de la Salle felt seriously afflicted at this desertion ; and being unable immediately to furnish masters in their stead, the schools insensibly declined ; and the cupidity of his old enemies shortly after completed their ruin. M. de la Cheztardie was grieved at the desertion of men, who had already gained a reputation in Paris ; and could not be persuaded but it was occasioned by an inflexible and ill-timed severity on the part of the superior, upon whom, in consequence, he visited the whole weight of his resentment. Such crosses are the most difficult to be borne ; and such are those with which the Lord often visits his elect.

In 1702, an establishment was formed in Troyes for two Brothers. A small salary was granted to them of 200 livres, the legacy of a pious lady for the establishment of a school in the parish of St. Nisier. Though the Brothers could hardly procure for this sum a mere subsistence, they were not, however, the less assiduous in their duties, and God gave a benediction to their labours, and furnished them with more ample means through Père Chantereau, an Oratorian, and a celebrated preacher, who, compassionating their poverty, undertook to have them more abundantly supplied. Being witness of the good effected by their labours, he conceived an ardent desire of increasing their number in the city. His influence at Troyes was powerful. He exerted it in favour of the Brothers, so that he procured for them a salary of 300 livres ; others considerably augmented this sum, and, finally, funds were made up for five Brothers more, who were brought forthwith.

It was also in 1702 that M. de la Salle commenced to establish his Institute in Rome. For many years he had this in contemplation, but was obliged to defer it until circumstances became more favourable. He assigns as the motives which led to this desire,—

1. To plant the tree of the Society, and to give it root, in the centre of unity, under the shade, under the eyes, and under the auspices of the Holy See.
2. To base it upon the solid rock ; that rock against which the gates of hell cannot prevail ; and to attach it for ever to that imperishable and infallible Church.
3. To have more easy access to the feet of Christ's Vicar for the approbation of his rules and constitutions, and to procure for the Brothers the favour of making the three solemn vows of religious.
4. To obtain the apostolic benediction for his Institute, that he may have the protection of the supreme Head of the Church, and to hold from him the mission of teaching the Christian doctrine, under the good will and pleasure of the bishops.
5. That some of his disciples may be in the capital of the Christian world—at the source of Catholic communion, to be there the hostages of his faith and of his inviolable attachment to the Holy See, and of his submission to all its decisions, at a time when so many persons in France appeared disposed to insubordination.

Such were always the sentiments of M. de la Salle ; such were the sentiments he invariably infused into the minds of his disciples ; and it is from a deep sense of this, that he often added to his name, " Roman Priest." He selected for this mission two Brothers, Gabriel Drolin and another, whose name is not mentioned, and who remained in Rome only a few months. They received

their instructions before departure; and the generous father gave them for their journey ten pistoles, all the money which the house then possessed. After many fatigues, they arrived in Rome, without money, without protection, without a dwelling, in fine, without any resource save Divine Providence. Shortly after, Brother Drolin was abandoned by his companion. Undismayed at this desertion, he overcame all the obstacles he met; he lived in Rome twenty-six years, not wishing to depart from it until he faithfully fulfilled the object of his mission. He spent three years in extreme poverty, at the expiration of which, he became conductor to one of the charitable schools, founded by Pope Clement XI. This situation was worth him only fifteen livres a month; but even that was considerable for a man who until then had nothing.

Had Brother Drolin sought only his own private interest, he would not have been a long time in indigence: he was presented with benefices, which he could possess, for he had received the tonsure. But, faithful to his good father, or rather, faithful to God and to his sacred engagements, he had only the interests of the Institute in view. It may, indeed, be averred, that after M. de la Salle, he was one of those to whom the Institute owes the most weighty obligations. The school given at Rome to Brother Drolin, was the foundation of the house which the Brothers have had there since the pontificate of Benedict XIII. That good Pope added to many other favours which he conferred on the Institute, that of constituting it into a religious order.

The wife of M. Chateau-Blanc, treasurer to his Holiness at Avignon, left in her will, funds to establish a free school. Her husband, a virtuous man, sought for men capable of fulfilling her wishes. He had not yet heard

of the Brothers. One of his friends at Lyons, came to Avignon, and spoke to him of the schools in Paris, and of the manner in which the society instructed children. M. Chateau-Blanc instantly wrote to the founder, who sent him two Brothers. While a suitable dwelling was preparing for them, M. Chateau-Blanc lodged them in his own house. They presented themselves to the archbishop, Francis Maurice de Gontery, to obtain his benediction, and to receive from him their mission. He received them with an affection that was never after diminished. In 1703, the schools were opened under his auspices. It happened here, as elsewhere, that it was resolved the number of the Brothers should be increased. M. Chateau-Blanc wrote to M. de la Salle, saying, that his disciples gave great satisfaction and edification to the city of Avignon, and that his Excellency the vice-legate was so pleased with the establishment, that he testified his approbation of it on every occasion. "We want still," he added, "two new Brothers. I take upon myself to provide for their subsistence, until Divine Providence shall furnish other means. I doubt not but God will do it; for, of all the works of charity, instruction is the most necessary in this city. I hope, sir, that you will come to judge of it in person, and that we shall have the honour of seeing you."

God prospered this good work; the archbishop and vice-legate, by order of Clement XI, provided for all the wants of the Brothers; and shortly after, the archbishop wished to be entirely the founder. He often visited the schools, and spent many hours in examining the children, and hearing the Brothers giving instructions. The kindness of that great and good prelate, and that of the vice-legate, contributed much to have the Institute approved at

Rome. In the authentic certificate, dated 20th February, 1720, that M. de Gontery gave them to be presented to the Sovereign Pontiff, he says, " Since the establishment of the gratuitous schools in the city of Avignon, the Brothers have always discharged their duties with zeal and assiduity. The public have derived great advantages from their application to the Christian education of the children; and their modesty and purity of morals have, at all times, given singular edification."

## CHAP. VII.

WHILE M. de la Salle was suffering a severe persecution in Paris, he was regarded elsewhere as a man raised up to labour for the salvation of souls—as a saint, worthy the first ages of the Church. It has been said, that not only the novitiate, but the houses of the Institute became numerous. This entailed on him a labour to which he was inadequate: he therefore selected from the Brothers, for master of novices, one who was experienced, and of whose virtue and prudence he had an exalted opinion. At first this Brother conducted himself with that charity and kindness so essential to a good superior; but shortly these disappeared, and excessive severity succeeded. The director of St. Sulpice conducted himself similarly towards the Brothers under his care. Mutual complaints were the consequence. The abbé exhorted the subjects to patience, obedience, and humility; and those in office to mildness and condescension, pointing out to them the fatal results of an unrelenting severity. These exhortations had, for a short time only, the desired effect.

M. de la Salle having to perform a journey of some days, the director and master of novices resumed their ill-treatment of the Brothers of their respective houses. On Sunday, the Brother director of St. Sulpice, and his community, came, as usual, to pass the day at the novitiate. One of the novices lately given him, committed some trivial fault; the director ordered him to be severely

punished : it was a chastisement reluctantly undergone, and, therefore, the more painful. The novice, and more of those who felt aggrieved, not having their own superior to redress their wrongs, addressed themselves to an individual, who was a great friend to the Institute and to M. de la Salle. He took their allegations in writing, that he might thereby obtain the deposition of M. de la Salle, and get him replaced by another superior. A memorial to that effect was drawn up by this ardent, but officious friend, and presented to the archbishop, Cardinal Noailles. His Eminence read it with great surprise. He could not reconcile the charges with the character of M. de la Salle ; yet the facts were strongly attested. A commission of inquiry was instituted, and entrusted to M. Pirot, one of the grand-vicars. In the mean time, the servant of God arrived from his journey, without having the least suspicion of what was going forward. The grand-vicar employed one day each week for a month, to make his inquiries ; and though M. de la Salle saw him pass and repass, he never asked his business. When all the informations were taken, M. Pirot took them to the archbishop, and represented to him the good order that existed in the house of the Brothers ; that the excesses complained of, occurred in the absence of the superior, and without his concurrence ; and that the abuses were apparently the work of two Brothers, who had overstretched their authority. His Eminence drew different conclusions : he addressed M. de la Salle, saying, " Sir, you are no longer superior. I have provided another for your community." With joy the holy man saw himself disengaged from a burden, which he for a long time wished to place on another. A humility like this, which is the same under all trials, evinces the most certain mark of Christian perfection.

M. Pirot was charged with the installation of the new superior. He took his leisure, and what may be a matter of astonishment, he requested M. de la Salle to induce the Brothers to acquiesce in the arrangement of his Eminence. The humble priest acquitted himself of this commission with zeal. He summoned the Brothers of Paris to attend the house of the novitiate, on a certain day, and at a fixed hour. They arrived, and shortly after, they saw M. Pirot, and a priest, whom they knew not, arrive also.

The vicar placed himself in the chair prepared for the ceremony, and surrounded by the Brothers, he prefaced his mission by the eulogy of their founder; but at the mention of M. Bricot as the new superior, they cried out, "Who is M. Bricot? M. de la Salle is the only superior we desire. We will have no other. His Eminence is good and equitable; when he hears our statement, he will do us justice by revoking his decree." M. Bricot begged of M. Pirot not to do violence to the Brothers, and to leave them M. de la Salle, to whom they were so strongly attached.

Unfortunately, the grand-vicar had publicly read the paper; the assembly could not, therefore, plead ignorance. On his part, he undertook to execute his commission fully; the Brothers on their part declared, that it was to M. de la Salle they vowed obedience; and, after his death, to one chosen from amongst themselves; that it was upon these conditions M. de Harlay and M. de Noailles had authorised M. de la Salle to assemble them into community; and that therefore they would oppose the recent appointment. So formal a declaration showed M. Pirot the inutility of expecting to succeed in the installation. M. de la Salle, in conducting him to the door, began to console him by saying, that time would bring the Bro-

thers to a sense of their duty. They heard these words ; they said, "It is what you should not promise. Our resolution is bound up with our vow. They have a mutual dependance on each other ; each is an exclusion of the new superior : if, notwithstanding our resistance, he be introduced into the house, he may bring to it new subjects who will promise him obedience ; he will find it empty ; as for us, we will quit with *him* to whom we have bound ourselves."

M. Pirot retired confused, and reported to the archbishop the reception he had received. His Eminence felt the injury done to his authority ; but he saw, that rigour and constraint were useless with men who believed themselves not bound by duty to obey him on this occasion, and who at worst were free to establish themselves in another diocese, where they might be left more tranquil. It was agreed at the council of his Eminence, that M. de la Salle should be left superior, but that the episcopal authority should at least be preserved. This delicate affair was committed to the prudence and address of M. de la Cheztardie. He knew too well the dispositions of the Brothers ; he dared not undertake the commission ; he therefore engaged the abbé M—— to negotiate the affair.

In the mean time, M. de la Salle was in the greatest embarrassment. He could not act as superior, and yet he could get no one to accept the situation. If he left Paris, the Brothers would follow him, and perhaps destroy the Institute. In this perplexity he recommended the matter to the Lord ; he conjured him to continue his protection towards him, if he could be useful for his glory. He went to the archiepiscopal palace at the moment when his Eminence was setting out for Conflans.

With torrents of tears he threw himself at his feet; he protested that he left nothing undone to procure for him a blind obedience. The archbishop, who always looked upon him as a saint, was moved to see him in this state; however, assuming an appearance of displeasure, he departed without a reply. The servant of God returned with as much tranquillity as if nothing had occurred.

It was stated, that the curé of St. Sulpice deputed the abbé M—— to negotiate between the Brothers and the archbishop. This abbé came to the house of the novitiate on a festival at seven o'clock in the morning, to sound the opinions of the Brothers. He proposed to himself to procure submission to the wishes of his Eminence, by some one of these three expedients. The first was, to make them, if possible, yield directly to the ordinance. Secondly, to leave them a shadow of liberty, by allowing M. de la Salle to be superior, at the same time, exact from them a consent to acquiesce in the wishes of his Eminence. Thirdly, to give them a nominal superior, who should perform no function of his office. Having arrived at the house, he introduced the subject as it were by chance; he appeared to feel all the interest possible in their Institute, and to dread the evil consequences of any disagreement with so powerful a prelate. He resorted successively to the two first expedients; the Brothers were unmoved in their resolution; but when he came to the third, and represented to them, that M. Bricot would be but a nominal superior, that M. de la Salle would hold the situation in reality, one of the Brothers asked, why he did not explain himself so at the commencement. The mediator profited skilfully of this advantage.

Three Brothers submitted at first; these induced others; twelve at length, for the sake of peace, consented to these

conditions ; the remainder, fearing some surprise, refused to accede. The abbé told them that twelve were sufficient to represent the whole community. To set aside new reflections, "Come," said he, "to make your excuse to the grand-vicar. He has a right to require such a reparation from your resistance ; and it will appease his Eminence, the archbishop, and dispose him to leave M. de la Salle in your house peaceably." At this he acquainted the holy priest with the proposition, and made him set off in a carriage to the house of M. Pirot. The twelve Brothers were to follow. One of them stopped, and asked, "What are we going to do, or to what are we going to bind ourselves ? We must know it. What are we promised ? Of this we are ignorant. It must be ascertained, and embodied with the pledges which we are to give and sign."

The abbé, with his escort, and the twelve Brothers, arrived at M. Pirot's at the same moment. M. Pirot felt great reluctance to ratify the proposed articles. He inquired whether they were conditions or not; the abbé M—— replied, that the Brothers asked them only as a favour. Many amongst the Brothers paid no attention to the expression, and were silent ; but others replied, that the articles were not favours, but conditions. M. Pirot seeming not to hear them, received the proposed submission, took leave of the Brothers, and thanked the abbé for his successful labours on the occasion.

On the Sunday following, M. Pirot came to the house of the novitiate, to instal M. Bricot, who accompanied him, as superior. The Brothers were assembled, and the ceremony passed peaceably, because they rested upon the previous treaty. In fine, the new superior, satisfied with the respect shown to the episcopal authority, ap-

peared once more only, and that at the end of three months. So completely nominal was his authority in the house, that his Eminence, by whom he was highly esteemed, shortly after employed him elsewhere. Thus terminated an affair, which, while it had served to exhibit in full relief the rare virtue of M. de la Salle, had threatened the destruction of the Institute.

When tranquillity was restored, the holy founder gave an evident proof that he was not one of those obstinate men who *abound in their own sense*. He was aware that the frequent austerities practised among his disciples had drawn on him the censure of many who knew not, that these austerities were introduced by the mutual consent of the father and his fervent children. In truth, he could be charged with nothing, but that he did not prevent these practices, and that he was not moderate enough in his own practices of mortification. People were persuaded that they formed a part of the rules, and that they served as an ordinary punishment for the least infraction. Hence, he was regarded as a headstrong man, who was limited in his understanding, incapable of governing, and who followed only his own ideas. To allay these prejudices, he forbade his disciples every exterior act of mortification, without his express permission, which was very difficult to be obtained.

He foresaw the fatal consequences of this relaxation. The love of the cross and of sufferings was evidently the means which God employed to uphold the Institute.

The event justified his fears ; he saw dissipation in some of the Brothers, for which he reproved them mildly ; but there was no longer on their part the same respect in the manner of receiving his advice ; on the contrary, they showed an air of independence, that seemed to forebode a

relapse into the same faults. He lamented the necessity which caused this relaxation in his children. However, the majority maintained their fervour, and were to him a source of consolation. The loss of eight or nine disciples, who then returned into the world to consummate their perdition, was not his only source of sorrow.

The person from whom the abbé rented the house which he occupied, sold it; the new proprietor gave notice to the Brothers to surrender. It was by a special favour that the abbé obtained permission to remain in it for some weeks, until he could find one that was suitable. Not finding one to his wishes, he took a small house situate in Rue Charonne, Faubourg St. Antoine, near a convent, occupied by the nuns of the Cross. He took possession of his new residence on the 20th August, 1703.

This house was in the parish of St. Paul. M. de la Salle visited the curé, and was received by him with great kindness, the curé being delighted to have in his parish men from whom he could obtain such services in the ministry. As the expenses of removing from the former to the present establishment were considerable, the founder began to be in want. Whether from a presentiment that he would be obliged to quit this new dwelling, or that he could not defray the expenses, he built no chapel, but went regularly to that of the nuns to say Mass, and give the Bread of life at stated times to his community. These nuns knew not at first who it was that came with many modest young men, poorly clothed. They admired the devotion with which he said Mass; they inquired, and were moreover informed of his wants and sufferings. Supplications poured in on the superioress from her subjects to relieve the holy priest and his community. She readily consented. Though grateful for their kindness, M. de

la Salle refused their repeated solicitations to become their director, as he considered the time short for the formation of his disciples, and that he could not, without imprudence, undertake any additional labour. The affections of these good nuns were not, however, estranged from him by this refusal.

If the superior had only to suffer from poverty, he would have been content; but the malice of men was not wanting to disturb his repose. He still held the Sunday schools. M. de la Cheztardie, until then, kept the schoolmasters in awe; but when they saw the superior had quitted his residence, they renewed their attacks, and had a memorial presented in their names to the lieutenant of police, in January, 1704. This memorial charged him and his Brothers with keeping, under the pretext of charity, schools not legally authorised, to the prejudice of those that were. It further stated, that if these free schools were to be tolerated, children who could pay, should not be admitted; while, in the present case, the rich and the poor were admitted without distinction.

On these charges, the Brothers and their superior were cited. Neither M. de la Salle nor any of the community appeared. Sentence for default was pronounced against them on the 22nd February, 1704. It decreed, that they should not take any children except those certified to be poor; that they should teach them only what was suitable to the condition of the parents; and that the Brothers, as a reparation for the past, should pay the costs, and fifty livres each as damages.

It is true, the damages were awarded merely for the sake of formality; the expenses of the suit were paid by the masters, because the Brothers were insolvent. The schools went on as usual for four months; the masters

then presented a second request, calling on the lieutenant of police for the execution of the former sentence, under a penalty of 500 livres damages with interest for each of the defaulters ; and that the superior of the Brothers should be sentenced to 2,000 livres damages with interest, to be paid to the society of writingmasters, for the injury done to them ; and moreover, that a notice should be issued to every individual who possessed sufficient means, prohibiting him to send his children to free schools, but to have them taught by those duly authorised : all which was granted. As M. de la Salle could not pay this demand, the seats and desks were carried away, and even the inscription over the door, "Brothers of the Christian Schools." Thus terminated the Sunday schools, the institution of which produced incalculable good for the six years that they lasted.

While the Brothers were thus persecuted in Paris, they were invited to establish themselves elsewhere. Two rich merchants of Marseilles had the curiosity to visit the schools of Avignon. They found in the schools such a large number of children, and in such a state of order and advancement, that on their return to Marseilles, they proposed to have such masters introduced into their city. A society of twelve subscribed 400 livres, the support of two Brothers, for whom the superior was glad to find an asylum out of Paris. A worthy individual made them a present of a house, and they opened school immediately for the children of sailors. It was not till after the plague had committed its horrible ravages in that great and commercial city, that the Brothers were called thither, to the number of sixteen, by Francis Xavier de Belzunce de Castel-Morton; the modern Charles Borromeo. This holy and illustrious prelate distributed them into four

other parishes ; and to secure their stability, he obtained, in 1737, that they should be received into the regular communities of the city.

From the persecution and disaster above mentioned, M. de la Salle was obliged to take refuge in the house attached to the schools of St. Sulpice. He dispersed into the provinces such of his disciples as had finished their novitiate ; others of them quitted him altogether ; so that there remained with him only a small number.

A school confided to him in the parish of St. Roque, furnished him with an opportunity of being no longer a burden to the Brothers of St. Sulpice ; but an interior voice told him to establish himself in Rouen. It was there the first project of these schools which he now conducted, was formed by Madame Maillefer, spoken of in the commencement of this memoir.

No application had yet been made from Rouen ; he should therefore await a solicitation, for which God thus prepared the way. The congregation of Jesuits in Rouen, among other good works, paid a salary of fifty crowns to a schoolmaster at Darnetal. He died ; the Abbé Deshayes, one of the congregation, and long a warm friend of the pious founder, seized this opportunity of bringing the Brothers at least to the gates of Rouen. This pious abbé represented to his confreres the benefit that would result from having the school placed under the Brothers, and succeeded in gaining their assent. The salary, however, was not to be augmented ; M. Deshayes wrote to the founder for the two Brothers, expressing, at the same time, his regret that the salary was so small.

The holy man, who saw his desires beginning to be accomplished, replied, that he accepted the invitation with gratitude ; that he required only one condition, which was,

that the Brothers should not be obliged to wear surplices, or take any part in assisting at the divine office, all which was forbidden in his Institute. M. Colbert, archbishop of Rouen, agreed; and two Brothers set out in the beginning of February, 1705.

The remarkable change for the better which took place in the schools of Darnetal, was no sooner known in Rouen, than the citizens expressed great anxiety to obtain from M. de la Salle, Brothers to conduct the poor schools of that city. The grand-vicar earnestly solicited the archbishop to that effect, who gave instructions to invite M. de la Salle, by letter, to visit Rouen. This letter reached him most opportunely. He then actually lived in the schools of St. Roque; and he foresaw that this new establishment would not exist, because they required masters that he could not supply. In fine, at the end of three years, he abandoned these schools. The servant of God went to Rouen, and easily agreed to the arrangement of the archbishop; he then revisited Paris, to dispose all things, and go fix himself with his disciples.

M. Colbert had not the intention of forming a foundation for new schools; there were some already established; but he was not at liberty to place there whomsoever he wished; that right belonged to the committee of the great hospital. He was determined to gain them over in favour of the Brothers, and for the greater security, he disclosed his intention to M. de Pont Carré, first president of the parliament. This great and good man, not only promised his support on that occasion, but he manifested in after times a strong attachment to the Brothers. A meeting was convened; the archbishop clearly and forcibly showed the necessity of placing the schools in the hands of the Brothers. Contrary to all expectation, this discourse

was badly received ; upon what grounds it cannot be ascertained, except that the enemy of man raises up obstacles to thwart holy enterprises. Though the prelate was supported by the eloquence and influence of the president, all that could be obtained was a consent merely exterior, with a tacit understanding of having it shortly retracted. The archbishop suppressed his doubts on the promise, and set out for Paris.

On his arrival there, he pressed M. de la Salle to send the Brothers without delay, that the committee might not have time to form new resolutions in his absence. It was too late ; the prelate received an account that they had retracted ; and, independently of their private reasons, they had been excited to this retraction by the prayers and murmurs of the masters who conducted the free schools of the city.

This news only animated M. Colbert to hasten the departure of the Brothers. The servant of God set out with his little flock ; they and the archbishop arrived in Rouen on the 19th May. A new meeting of the committee was called by the prelate and the president, both of whom were also of that body. After much discussion, the rest of the committee yielded on the following conditions, which were equivalent to a refusal.

1. That the Brothers should be present when the poor of the city hospital were rising and going to bed ; and that they should recite for them morning and evening prayers.
2. That they should, moreover, instruct them, and attend also to the four large schools of the city.
3. They were to return from the schools, though situated in the most remote parts of the city, to take their refection at the hospital.

4. On their return from the schools, they were to serve the poor at table.

5. Five Brothers were to perform all these duties.

The committee had no expectation that the Brothers would accede to these conditions. M. de la Salle, however, agreed to them, having for a long time had a great desire to obtain the management of these schools, formerly conducted by M. Niel; and feeling, moreover, an interior assurance that Providence would ultimately bless the undertaking with success.

In a few days after their arrival, the Brothers entered upon their mission in the great hospital and in the schools of St. Maclou, St. Godard, St. Eloi, and St. Vivien. They were allowed board and lodging, with a very small salary.

M. de la Salle sought a suitable place in Rouen for his novices. He found it at the *faubourg* of St. Severus. This was an old house called *St. Yon*, well situated, having an extensive enclosure, and offering a very agreeable solitude, though contiguous to a populous city. It was formerly called the manor of *Hauterville*, and had been possessed by different noblemen, one of whom bore the name of M. de St. Yon. He possessed it up to the year 1615; having previously built a chapel there in honour of the martyr *St. Yon*, who was a disciple of St. Denis, apostle of France.

Mad. de Louvois, to whom it belonged, put it up for sale, when M. de la Salle came to Rouen. He consulted M. Colbert, who commended the project. The founder applied to Mad. de Louvois. This lady had often heard M. le Tellier, archbishop of Rheims, speak of M. de la Salle in terms of praise. Full of esteem for the holy man, she let him the house at 400 livres annually. In

the month of August, 1705, the founder brought thither his novices. Tranquil in this port after so many storms, he applied himself with new care to form his novices to the virtues proper to their vocation; he neglected nothing to infuse into them by precept, but much more by example, the spirit of fervour and mortification, which past troubles had unfortunately enfeebled. Subjects presented themselves to him: he received them as usual, requiring from them only a sincere desire of becoming sanctified. He renewed the annual retreats, which had been interrupted by the necessity of ceding to the violence of his enemies, and the Brothers, who were dispersed in different places, visited St. Yon, to renew their primitive piety.

## CHAP. VIII.

M. RIGOLET, first president in the *Chambre des Comptes*, at Dijon, manifested his piety and tender charity for the poor, by founding a free school in that city. Two Brothers were sent thither, on a salary of 400 livres, and a suitable residence. In 1705, the schools were opened. The children of this illustrious man, after his decease, not only took these schools under their protection, but added to the first foundation as much as was adequate to the support of four additional Brothers.

Scarcely had this occurred, when the pious founder heard that the writingmasters of Paris still charged the Brothers with admitting the children of parents who could pay. It was their only pretext for renewing hostilities. Measures were taken to remove it effectually. M. de la Cheztardie commissioned the Abbé de Gergi, afterwards his successor, with taking a census of all in the parish of St. Sulpice, who would return themselves poor; each was to receive a certificate to that effect. At the same time, the Brothers had orders to admit only the children who had such certificates. All this was done; the Brothers lost not a single scholar; and the masters of Paris saw, that to proceed further was impossible. Had this precaution been taken at first, much trouble and anxiety would have been spared to the founder.

In the mean time, the Brothers of Rouen began to sink under their labours. These labours were too many

and too weighty—instruction in the schools, the fatigue of the journey to and from them, and attendance on the poor in the hospital. For two years they led this painful life. At length exhausted, they drew up a memorial, in which they represented to their superior the necessity of renouncing their engagements with the committee :

1. Because their small number was not in proportion to the multitude they had to instruct.
2. That excessive labour exhausted their health.
3. That fatigue and embarrassment deranged their interior, and left them no time for prayer or other exercises of piety. They finished their memorial by saying, that if the committee confined them to the duty of the town schools, they would attend them cheerfully; that they required to live out of the hospital, and in what number the committee pleased; and that they would expect the salary paid to the masters who had already presided.

M. de la Salle, as far as he was concerned, could not refuse so reasonable a request. He presented the memorial to the committee. They were pleased that the Brothers made the overture to withdraw. The second article of their request appeared to the committee a favour which required to be purchased; and their reluctance to grant it showed how ill-disposed they were towards the poor Brothers, whose health had been ruined in the hospital. The salary given to M. Niel, and to his first successor, amounted to 1200 livres for four persons; it was unfeelingly reduced to half, out of which they were to pay house rent; and by an inconceivable caprice, it was stipulated in the contract, that there should be at least ten Brothers for the service of these schools. Such terms amounted nearly to a refusal. However, the desire of the superior to possess M. Niel's schools, and the zeal of the

Brothers for the Institute, induced them to accept these conditions.

M. de la Salle took, for himself and his disciples, the house above mentioned : they were miserable there according to the world ; but they consoled themselves in their poverty, because they had at least the advantage of being at full liberty to follow their rules, and to nourish their piety by holy exercises.

When it is recollectcd, that the conduct and services of the Brothers at Darnetal induced the inhabitants of Rouen to introduce the Christian Schools into that city, it will be easily inferred that the Brothers had many friends among the citizens ; they, however, suffered many indignities, all which they endured with the most edifying patience.

M. de Piancourt, bishop of Mende, was anxious to have some of M. de la Salle's disciples. This pious bishop, being advanced in age, wished to crown a life full of zeal for his flock by the foundation of a gratuitous and Christian School in his episcopal city. In this application he was not successful ; it was only in 1707 that he obtained one subject, the number of schools recently established having rendered it impossible to supply another. Though it was against rule to send a single Brother, M. de la Salle yielded in this instance, to satisfy the wishes of the prelate

The bishop was highly pleased with the Brother, put him immediately into active service, and wrote the following letter to the superior :—“ I cannot, Sir, sufficiently bless God for having inspired you with the design of forming masters to instruct youth in Christian piety. Seminaries form good ecclesiastics ; but good teachers give the first impression of piety and religion, which

contribute to sanctify all Christians. I am highly pleased with the Brother you have sent. He has commenced in the expectation that another will come to his assistance. I shall be much obliged to you by sending a good subject, capable of instructing well in writing and arithmetic ; for by these means children are attracted to learn the principles of Christian piety. On my part, I will give them all the protection they can expect, so that they will have perfect satisfaction in their employment. The Brother here can inform you of my sentiments towards him and the establishment. Let me request that your choice of a Brother to send me, may be such as will enhance the esteem which I entertain of your admirable society.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Your very humble servant,

“  P. P. DE PIANCOURT,

“ Bishop of Mende.

“ *Mende, April 8th, 1707.*”

Two Brothers were sent successively by the pious founder. So great was the satisfaction of the holy prelate at their labour, that he made a will, in which he bequeathed to the Institute of M. de la Salle, a yearly income of 510 livres for the support of three Brothers, who were to teach the schools of Mende. After this wise precaution had been taken, the good prelate saw the end of his days approach in peace ; he had nothing more to desire upon earth, because he did for his people all the good which a tender charity could suggest.

In no part of the kingdom was a school of the Christian Brothers more necessary than in Alais ; a district which had become the last entrenchment of Calvinism in France. Lewis XIV omitted nothing that could bring

back such as had revolted to the subjection of the Church and allegiance of their king; he obtained from Pope Innocent XII, that Alais should be dismembered from the diocese of Nismes, and erected into a bishopric. The first prelate of this see was Francis Maurice de Sault, who had until then been at the head of the mission in that country.

Immediately on his appointment, he sought for fellow-labourers, animated with an apostolic zeal, who might aid him in cultivating the wide field committed to his care. M. Merrez, canon of Nismes, was one of the principal persons who came to share in his labours. These two holy missionaries, instructed by long experience in the art of gaining souls to God, saw no more effectual means of exterminating heresy, than by procuring teachers of zeal and piety, for the education of the youth. A reflection on the causes which gave rise to the rebellion in the Cevennes, confirmed them in their opinion; in fact, they were the lessons of a fanatical schoolmaster; thus these two missionaries resolved to destroy the evil by a way similar to that from which it had its origin.

M. Merrez being a fellow-student of M. de la Salle, at the seminary of St. Sulpice, had since learned the great sacrifices he made to form zealous and efficient masters for the instruction of poor neglected children. He had no doubt but they were such as he desired. What he heard of the Schools in Marseilles and Avignon, confirmed this opinion. He judged besides,

1. That of all teachers, the best should necessarily be, those who enter on this important employment by a vocation from God, and who, exercising it from charity, receive more graces than others for the instruction of children.

2. That none are more virtuous or better qualified than those who are formed at an early period of life, and at leisure, in a community whose principal object is the education of youth.

3. That only an Institute established for this pious purpose, could perpetuate the good work, and replace those masters whom death had taken away, or who were no longer fit for active service.

Full of these impressions, he suggested the matter to the zealous prelate, who consented thereto, and instructed him to write to M. de la Salle. He wrote the following letter, dated June, 1707.

"I know not, sir, if my name be still known to you, or if you retain any remembrance of me; I have never forgotten you since our intimacy at the seminary of St. Sulpice. You were then canon of Rheims: it was in 1671. I have since learned, that having quitted that dignity, you have devoted yourself to all kinds of good works, and among others, to the forming of a community of teachers, who render great services wherever they are established. We want at present two for Alais; heresy must be removed, and replaced by the Catholic religion. The work is great; good labourers are necessary: we will have them paid by the community. Thus, your Brothers will have nothing to ask from the parents of the children; the salaries of the masters are already established by his Majesty; therefore the matter will be nothing new.

"But we must take these dissenters on the side of interest, and show them, that the new masters will form good writers. I have recourse to you for your disciples; Père Beauchamp has highly extolled to me those whom he had seen at Avignon and Marseilles. In the diocese of Alais, nearly all are dissenters; there is then a necessity for

good workmen, who could re-establish religion there by the education of children. Zealous as you are, you will, I trust, cast your eyes on this country, which of all parts in the kingdom stands most in need of assistance: we want teachers more than any other class of missionaries; we have preachers, but not catechists."

The servant of God read this letter with incredible joy; he saw nothing more conformable to the object of his Institute, than to labour in rooting out heresy. He selected from among the Brothers, two of the best qualified. They set out without delay, and opened a school in the month of October of the same year, 1707. The bishop obtained sufficient funds from the king for their support; this has caused the schools of the Brothers in that country to be called the *Royal Schools*.

So abundant were the fruits of their labours, that the bishop entered an interdict against any others to teach; he also wrote for more Brothers to the founder, on the 28th January, 1708. He says, "We have here, sir, your Brothers, who give so much satisfaction, that I wish for more to send into our towns and villages of Cevennes. If I had thirty, I could employ them well. I have, in asking for others, the honour to thank you for those we have. I do now, and will do henceforward for them, all that is possible for me, for they render infinite service. I shall take care to preserve them in the spirit of their state; to watch over them, to give my advice when necessary, and further, to render you an account of them. We want a Brother for a second large school, because we are obliged to divide that which is established on account of the numbers, and for the convenience of the inhabitants. I hope, if we can extend the assistance of your good and dear Brothers, it will be an infallible means of serving the

families of our poor Catholics. I send you thus my sentiments, that we may act together in concert for this lost country, which claims your charitable zeal. You may be assured, that I will spare nothing to help your Brothers, and that I shall be warmly engaged in their interests on every occasion. I ask your pious prayers, assuring you, sir, that it is in the sincerity of my heart,

“ I am, your humble servant,

“  FRANCIS,

“ First Bishop of Alais.”

Though the bishop protected the Brothers in a special manner ; they had, however, to suffer much from the Calvinists, who sent their children to the schools with instructions to create disorder in them ; yet, the Brothers, animated with the spirit of their founder and of their holy religion, bore all in meekness. The bishop paid them frequent visits, to console and fortify them.

For some years there existed at Grenoble a society formed by ecclesiastics, for the relief of the unfortunate. God so blessed this holy undertaking, that the most respectable persons entered into the association ; among whom were M. Enemond, Alemand de Mont Martin, bishop of Grenoble, and the principal members of parliament. When any member died, a solemn service was offered for the repose of his soul, at which the society assisted ; such of the members as were priests, celebrated a certain number of Masses for the deceased ; and those who were laymen, got an equal number offered. In one of the meetings of this society, a member proposed the establishment of gratuitous schools in Grenoble. The measure was instantly adopted, and each contributed according to his means for the support of the Brothers.

Two of the members, the abbés Saleon and Canel, had

occasion to visit Paris. They asked M. de la Salle for two Brothers. He gave them, and the two Brothers set out for Grenoble. A school was immediately opened under their directions, to the great satisfaction of the inhabitants. So many establishments formed in succession, was a visible mark of the Divine protection over the Institute.

In Paris, the Brothers were badly accommodated in respect of their residence, in which was kept the school of the district ; it was small, badly situated, and without a garden. By the influence of a Brother, M. de la Cheztardie gave permission to seek out for a convenient dwelling. M. de la Salle came to Paris for the purpose : having found a good house outside the barrière of St. Sévres, large and retired, with a garden attached, he purchased it with the consent of M. de la Cheztardie, and then returned to Rouen.

At this period, a lady, named Madame Poignen, of St. Denis, renewed her solicitations to have two Brothers sent to that town. The Rev. Père de l'Hostellerie, prior of the celebrated abbey of St. Denis, joined in this request, which was successful.

A dreadful famine, which raged through France in 1709, troubled the repose of M. de la Salle at St. Yon. His community was composed of twenty Brothers, the majority of whom were novices ; the others were ancient Brothers, who had charge of the boarders then at St. Yon. Their subsistence for the greater part had been derived from the produce of the garden, which was less productive than usual during these times of scarcity. They had, moreover, at this time the misfortune to lose M. Colbert, the bishop. M. de Aubigné, his successor, had not for the Brothers the same sentiments of esteem and affection.

It was a matter of necessity for M. de la Salle to withdraw. The new establishment in Paris could contain his novices : he conducted them thither, hoping to obtain in the capital of the kingdom that support, which was refused him by that of Normandy. This increase was too much for the house in Paris. It had funds for twelve Brothers only ; it had now to support forty, besides several postulants, who presented themselves for admission to escape the famine, whom the superior had not the heart to refuse. Being reproached for this weakness by some of the Brothers, the humble superior agreeably replied, “ It costs us something, it is true, but they have made a good retreat, which will be of advantage to them.” He found himself reduced to the same extremity as in 1693 ; what he experienced then of God’s goodness, made him preserve his tranquillity. However, the baker refused one day to furnish bread, as payment was not to be had. All the resources of the house were exhausted. The holy man, animated with that faith which can remove mountains, went to say Mass. On his way he met a person, whose charity in their favour seemed to be exhausted. This person asked him where he was going ; he replied, with an admirable tranquillity, “ I am going to celebrate Mass, and to beg of God, that he may send our community wherewith to live this day.” “ Go in peace,” said the individual ; “ I will provide it myself.” This time of public calamity was one continued series of miracles by Divine Providence, without whose interposition they would have died of hunger.

At length, the rigours of the famine abated. The rich harvest of 1710 repaired the evils of the preceding year ; and with this plenty, returned the desire of calling the Brothers to the work of instruction. M. Huchon, curé of Versailles, required two ; they were granted. It is

well known, that he had the esteem and confidence of Lewis XIV. The contiguity of the court made the houses bear an exorbitant rent at Versailles. They got one near the deer park. Funds for their support were instantly provided, and the school was opened.

Some time after, a secular master, who held a school near the parish, died. Two Brothers more were sent to take his place, and one to manage temporals. It was after the death of Lewis XIV that they were put in possession of the house, which was near the parish, and had served as a residence for a community of priests. This establishment at Versailles seemed of advantage to the Institute; however, it had like to have been the contrary.

Among the four Brothers who held the schools, there was one of distinguished merit, who acted as director; he managed a school admirably well; he knew how to make himself respected and beloved by the children. He knew, moreover, that he possessed these talents; and what added to his presumption was, that he was a welcome guest at the curé's house. A thousand little enjoyments were within his reach; he yielded to the temptation, and insensibly became disgusted with poverty, and with his dress; and began to think and act, and speak and dress, like a secular. He neglected the rules; but he required their strict observance by the others. It may be said, that to him the air of the court was truly contagious.

M. de la Salle becoming acquainted with this disorder, paid a visit to Versailles, and saw that the report was not exaggerated. Charity for a disciple made him take measures to show the absurdity of his conduct. He received the advice badly, and told the curé, that M. de la Salle was prepossessed against him, and that very likely he should quit. M. de la Salle hinted his wishes to that

effect ; the curé, blind to these defects, opposed the departure of the Brother. The pious founder represented the evil consequences which would follow from this opposition. M. Huchon persisted, and the Brother was triumphant.

In a short time, this unfortunate Brother fell from bad to worse ; in fine, he took a secular dress altogether, and departed early one morning without giving any intimation to the other Brothers. This opened the eyes of the curé ; he, with sorrow, acknowledged his error in supporting this unworthy Brother against the superior. He entreated pardon, and requested another Brother, promising to leave to the abbé the entire disposal of his disciples thenceforth.

A virtuous priest, Vincent de St. John Delzé du Rouze, from the diocese of Viviers, having come to Avignon and witnessed the services rendered there by the Brothers, felt himself strongly inclined to consecrate all his patrimony to the foundation of a school in the town of Vans, in the diocese of Urés. This little town was almost filled with Calvinists. He knew that a great means of extirpating heresy was to give a Catholic education to the children. In 1708 he made his will, and declared in it the Brothers whom he had brought to be heirs to all his property, on condition that they would charge themselves with the instruction of the children of Vans ; that they would form them to piety, and teach them the principles of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion ; "persuaded as I am," said he, "that the greater part of young children fall into an irregularity of morals, for want of a religious education."

To secure the validity of this will, he left *five sous* to each of his natural heirs ; begging of them not to take

ill of him, that he had preferred to their interests, those of religion and of the poor. After the death of this pious ecclesiastic in 1710, the will was sent to M. de la Salle, who hastened to execute the wishes of the deceased.

In the same year, 1710, Moulins, the capital of Bourbonnois, shared the advantage then possessed by the principal towns and cities of France. M. Aubery, priest in that town, had, by disinterested zeal, taken under his care the uninstructed children. He knew the reputation of M. de la Salle and of his disciples. His great services and virtues procured for him influence enough to have three Brothers brought thither, to have a neat house built for them, and a suitable fund raised for their support. This zealous priest died in 1730, with a reputation of great sanctity.

The abbé Languet, grand-vicar of Autun, since bishop of Soissons, and subsequently archbishop of Sens, lived then at Moulins, and heard of the Brothers' singular system of instruction. He came to witness it; and so pleased was he with the manner in which they taught the catechism, that he ordered the senior Brother to instruct in the church of St. Peter, the principal church in the town. All the young ecclesiastics had orders to attend the instructions. These good Brothers were mortified at this distinction; but the vicar should be obeyed. He who had been appointed catechist, acquitted himself with great honour.

Boulogne-sur-Mer was the last place where M. de la Salle formed an establishment for schools. M. de la Cocherie, a man of high rank and benevolence, was the founder. By his influence he raised sufficient funds for four Brothers, who opened in the lower town a school, the success of which caused another to be opened in the

upper town, under the superintendence of two additional Brothers. The house in which the six Brothers lodged together being inconvenient, a site for a new house in the lower town was obtained from the king by the inhabitants. The Marquis de Colembert, governor of the town, not only supplied the materials for the building, but drew the plan of the house, and got tradesmen, carmen, and labourers, to assist gratuitously in its erection. This ardour and affection bore honourable testimony to the merits of the Brothers. In a short time their house was built, and was both elegant and commodious.

## CHAP. IX.

AT this period commenced the most trying and painful events of the life of M. de la Salle. A young incumbent, aged about twenty-one years, visited the founder, and besought him to execute a design which he had formed; it was, to rear poor children who were over seven years of age, and to place them apprentices to some trade; that at the same time they could be taught what a Christian should know of his religion: he added, that he had already incurred some expense for the purpose; and conjured the holy man to give him, as soon as possible, two Brothers to carry out this project. M. de la Salle praised and encouraged the enterprise; representing to him, however, that it did not enter into the object of his Institute. The young man wished to read the rules; he obtained them, and found mentioned in them seminaries of masters for the country. This idea pleased him: he renounced the first project, and declared for the latter.

Being asked what he could furnish yearly, he replied, that, at present, he could command yearly only 800 livres, which his father had given him for private expenses; that it was a part of the revenue of his benefice; that he would retain 100 livres only for his own use; that the 700 livres which remained, should be applied to the support of the seminary for two or three years; that he would then be of age, would be in the full enjoyment of his benefice, and would be enabled to increase the sum. M. de la

Salle heard all this; prudence dictated delay; he therefore requested of the young man not to proceed in his design without mature deliberation.

For a year he continued his visits to M. de la Salle. His perseverance struck the pious founder; he no longer resisted a design which seemed to proceed from God. The holy man addressed himself to M. Vivant, grand-penitentiary of Notre-Dame, to obtain the necessary permission from Cardinal Noailles. It was granted, provided that the seminary should not be in Paris, but in the vicinity. This condition was painful to the abbé, as he had already begun to treat for a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine; however, it was necessary to submit, and the village of St. Denis was selected. The sister of Mademoiselle Poignant, foundress of the school, recently established there, had a house desirable for the intended seminary. The young incumbent purchased it at 13,000 livres; but he desired that his name should not be in the deed. M. Roger lent his; and as the incumbent had not the money, he pressed the pious founder to advance the sum required. It happened that the founder received at that time 5,000 livres, to be applied in any good work he should deem necessary. He advanced this sum, and M. Roger paid the balance.

Possession was taken of the house by the Brothers; and in a few days three young men were received for the desired object. Cardinal Noailles having taken it under his protection, and the king having, at his request, bestowed on it privileges, there was reason to believe that this establishment would subsist; it wanted nothing apparently to give it stability; but two years had scarcely passed, when the father of the young man, excited, no doubt, by the hidden enemies of M. de la Salle, upset a work which

promised to be useful. The father was made acquainted with what had passed unknown to him; he reproached his son with having entered on such a matter without his approbation. If all the circumstances be duly weighed, it will be seen, that the father had no right to use in this affair his paternal authority. It was an ecclesiastical property, which his son, already of a competent age, had applied with much deliberation to promote the education of poor children.

Matters rested thus for some time. M. de la Salle set out in February, 1711, to make a visitation of the houses in Provence. In the course of his visit he received letters, which recalled him instantly to Paris, as the father of the incumbent had taken legal proceedings against him, alleging the son to be under age when he made the contract. The holy man recommended the affair to God; he made a sacrifice to him of his honour, if necessary for his greater glory, and then drew up a memorial in justification of his conduct. This young man had not sufficient probity to declare circumstances as they really occurred; thirteen of his letters, which were placed with the memorial in the hands of a man worthy of confidence, proved enough in justice, but not in law, for M. de la Salle; it was decreed that he should lose the house. This affair continued for a long time the general topic of discourse; but the servant of God, submissive to his fate, drank with satisfaction the bitter cup, which assimilated him the more closely to his divine Redeemer.

What proves the injustice of the proceeding, is, that M. Roger was repaid what he had advanced; M. de la Salle lost the 5,000 livres and his honour. M. Roger, when on his death-bed, made some atonement for this iniquitous transaction, by declaring in his will, that he

bequeathed to M. de la Salle, founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, *for conscience sake*, an income of 250 livres, which he should enjoy after the demise of a servant, to whom he left it in the first instance. This income was uncertain ; the servant was younger than M. de la Salle ; however, God permitted that he died in a short time, and that the abbé became possessed of it, when most in need thereof.

He arrived at Avignon in the Lent of 1712, to resume his visitation. The Brothers received him with every mark of esteem, and desired to detain him ; but he was resolved to visit all the houses of the Institute in that vicinity. This resolution alarmed the Brothers of Avignon ; they knew the *Camisards* scoured the country to exercise their fury against Catholics, particularly against ecclesiastics. The prayers and the tears of the Brothers were useless ; he thought it would show diffidence in the Divine goodness to fear such dangers. God protected him, and he arrived safely at Alais. Not only the Brothers, but numbers of distinguished personages were glad to see him. He received a thousand congratulations for the great edification of the Brothers, and their signal services to society. The bishop in particular received him with the greatest honour, being filled with veneration for his person : he closed his praises of the Brothers by saying, that the Catholic religion made a sensible progress there since their arrival. The pious founder passed some days at Alais, and thence parted for the little town of Vans in Languedoc.

Never was joy more sincere than was felt by the Brothers of that place ; nor was *his* inferior, when he learned with what application they discharged their duties, and the patience with which they endured, in this remote place,

the taunts and outrages of the children of the Calvinists. From Alais he set out for Mende. He had to suffer much on this journey ; he was often in great danger passing the mountains of Gévandan ; he had to climb crags and to go through narrow paths on the verge of frightful precipices. He arrived safely, reposed himself for two days, and then paid some visits of courtesy. The bishop of Mende received him very kindly, highly praised the zeal of the Brothers, and asked him to dinner. It was only by stating, that he never dined from the Brothers, that the holy man could resist the good bishop's pressing invitation. Many respectable persons waited on him. They were anxious to see a person of whose piety they had a high idea from that of his disciples.

He returned to Vans in order to pass through Uzés, where he was kindly treated by the bishop. This zealous prelate wanted a promise that none of the Brothers of that place should be changed. M. de la Salle gave such solid reasons for the inconvenience which might arise from such a pledge, that the good prelate left all to his own discretion.

Through Alais he passed to M——, a place of some celebrity. Hell prepared for him a persecution sufficient to upset his constancy, had not the arm of God fortified him at that moment. Many ecclesiastics desired his arrival ; but all had not the same motives ; the greater part desired an acquaintance with him, on account of his zeal and labours in the cause of religion ; and others with a view to disseminating their new doctrine, by gaining the superior of a congregation which had the instruction of youth. What is done from a party spirit is generally done with more ardour ; and hence these latter were the first to visit him on his arrival : they proffered him a thou-

sand services, money, patronage, and whatever else was necessary for the establishment of schools. They artfully sought to gain his confidence before they would discover their sentiments. The former, who were attached to the ancient faith of the Church, were less ardent, but more sincere in their protestations. He congratulated himself on having quitted Paris, and come to a place of such opulence, where so high a value was set on his Institute.

Believing his absence from St. Yon must have injured it, he thought this loss could be compensated by establishing here a novitiate. He proposed it: it was immediately applauded, and great anxiety manifested for carrying it into effect. What a contrast between what he saw here, and what he experienced at Rheims, at Paris, and at Rouen! One gave a large donation; those who could not at that moment contribute, gave a promise of future support. A house was rented and furnished; novices were to come in numbers. The holy founder, hitherto unaccustomed to such prosperity, began to fear that the work which he had undertaken, was not approved by Heaven. The works of which God is the author, generally suffer great opposition from man. However, as his motives were pure, he committed all to Divine Providence. In a short time subjects arrived, donations came in proportion, and the novitiate assumed a regular form.

Besides the novitiate, it was proposed to found parochial schools in the city; the best-intentioned co-operated in the undertaking. A Jesuit who preached the Lent in one of the principal churches, delivered a sermon expressly to recommend this work of charity. He spoke of the importance of a good education—of the means of rendering it available to salvation. Several rich and respectable persons united to carry this object into effect; but the

recommendation coming from a Jesuit, the sectaries relaxed in their zeal, and actually thwarted the project.

At length the moment was arrived to know if M. de la Salle could be brought to favour the new doctrine. A few bold propositions were let fall as it were by chance. The holy man, perfectly instructed in the controversy of the times, appeared scandalised and indignant: however, he replied not, because he thought there was more imprudence than malice in what was asserted. His air spoke his opinion. To gain such a man was a matter of importance, and worthy of trouble and mightier efforts. They returned to the charge; they turned the conversation on the Pope and bishops: of the latter they spoke with contempt. The holy man avenged their cause. He saw the object of his pretended friends, and he withdrew from any further communication with them. These revolted spirits being thus irritated against him, were intent on his destruction. The two Brothers who held a school in the city for some years, having been requested by the superior to spend the vacation at the novitiate, to renew their fervour and piety by performing the exercises practised at Paris and Rouen, these enemies of peace represented to them, that they had great labour with the children; that some moments of relaxation were necessary; and that their superior was too rigid and too regardless of human weakness. They still further advised them to represent this order to the founders of the schools, and that such fatigue would soon render them unequal to their duties.

This counsel was exactly followed by the two Brothers, whose conduct showed the necessity for their performing the exercises required. The founders declared that the Brothers should be left free. The holy man saw the

inutility of opposition. His enemies next dried up the source of alms which were bestowed, and thus the Brothers were reduced to extreme want.

By the seditious language used to the novices by these enemies, through want of common subsistence, and perhaps of a proper vocation, all these young men left the novitiate. Many, to justify this species of apostacy, spoke in harsh terms of the superior. Libels were published against him; and what afflicted him most was, that some of his own children quitted the Institute, and became his persecutors. He was reproached by the two who had lent themselves to his enemies, that he came to Provence, not to build up, but to destroy. He had still sufficient authority to send one of these to Mende.

The community wanting the accustomed resources, was reduced to the greatest extremity. Some of those novices who remained, saw this general opposition, and thought it was useless to engage in an Institute which seemed on the verge of destruction: they departed, and left the holy man a prey to desolation. To oppose the fatal consequences of the libel, he drew up a written reply, couched in a solid but Christian and charitable manner. Its fate was the same as that of most works of this kind; they condescended not to read the refutation.

As it was not yet time to revisit Paris, and as he had a port convenient to embark for Italy, he thought to gratify a desire, which he had for a long time, of visiting the capital of the Christian world, to throw himself at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, and ask the confirmation of his Institute. He bore all these persecutions as due to his unworthiness; he was therefore inclined to think he could no longer be useful to the Institute by his residence in France. A vessel ready to sail for *Civita Vec-*

chia favoured his design and seemed to invite its execution. He consulted God in prayer: he took his berth, and was on his way to embark, when the bishop met him, and asked him whither he was going. He replied, "To Rome." The bishop told him to return to his house; that he wished him to take possession of a school which he destined for the Brothers. In conformity to his usual docility, he returned instantly, and never more thought on the journey. This school, which the prelate wished to have formed, was but a further artifice of the abbé's enemies, and gave him fresh cause of regret to see means employed to counteract the bishop's intentions.

Such continual contradictions to the servant of God made him fear that his Institute, which he regarded as the work of God, was but *his own work*, prompted by vain glory. He consulted his conscience—it reproached him with nothing. In this perplexity he redoubled his prayers and mortifications; an awful aridity succeeded. He often repeated these words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Shall my sins sever me from thee for ever? When shall I be reconciled to thee?" Heaven seemed still insensible to his complaints. In this abandonment he believed himself the cause of all these persecutions; he meditated a retreat into some solitude to bewail his sins. Like another Jonas, he gave himself as a victim to appease the storm. "My absence," said he to some of his faithful disciples, "will calm my persecutors, and inspire them with the thought of giving peace to my dear children." He confided his resolution to one of his disciples, and retired to a solitude ten or twelve leagues distant. In this retreat he forgot all creatures. He found a return of heavenly sweetness and consolations from his divine Protector.

His enemies knowing that he disappeared, had the malignity to report that he abandoned the Institute. This acquired an extensive circulation; a great majority of the Brothers in the provinces believed it, and thought of returning into the world, persuaded that, as he withdrew, the Institute could no longer be upheld. God permitted not that the evil should extend so far: the Brothers received a certain assurance, that their father had only retired from the fury excited against him; that he would acquire new vigour in his intimate intercourse with God; and that shortly he would resume the government of the society. This intelligence inspired them with confidence. They offered up their prayers for his preservation; but God reserved for him trials equally painful, by inspiring him with a desire of seeking an asylum from the Brothers of Mende. With this intention he quitted his solitude and went to that town. They were three in number. Two of them had allowed themselves to be perverted by the Brother recently sent there; they had agreed to live together independently of the Institute, without holding any intercourse with the superior or any of the body.

On his arrival they received him coldly. They judged that this reception would induce him to remove them elsewhere; they, therefore, prepossessed the bishop and magistrates against such a measure. When the superior visited the bishop and magistrates successively, they all declared the object of his visit, and told him their opposition to a removal. To avoid all discussion and unbecoming explanations, he contented himself by saying, that he respected so highly the bishop and magistrates, that he would conform to their wishes. He returned to the house, convinced that his unworthy disciples would soon carry their insolence farther. He was resolved to

exercise patience—to say nothing with an air of reprimand, and to live with them as a simple Brother without authority. Two or three days passed in this manner. At length they took a resolution to banish him from the house; the most impudent of the three took upon himself to execute the project. This Brother had the audacity to say, that if he wished to remain in the house, he should pay for his board: if not, that he should seek a dwelling elsewhere. A great saint only could bear such treatment without complaint. It was aggravated by the fact, that the house in which he received it, was legally and actually his property.

M. de la Salle adored in silence the hand of God, which had thus afflicted him: he took refuge among the Capuchins, who treated him with the utmost kindness and hospitality. While he lived as a solitary among these holy religious, it was announced to him by Brother Timothy, whom he had charged with the novitiate in Provence, that the few remaining novices were dispersed. When that Brother presented himself at the house in Mende, the Brothers there shut the door against him, and said they knew him not. On relating this, the holy founder said, “God be blessed, my dear Brother! For what purpose do you address yourself to me? Are you not aware of my inability to conduct others? Are you not aware that many Brothers relish me no longer, and that these words of the Gospel seem directed to me, *We will have him no longer as superior over us?* They are right, for I am not qualified.” The Brothers to whom these feeling words were addressed, felt the ingratitude of those who had treated him so unkindly. Tears flowed from his eyes; he made protestations of attachment, and an inviolable submission, from which he never departed: he

asked his benediction and an obedience. The holy man could not restrain his tears, and granted the request.

A young lady of respectability, named Mademoiselle de St. Denis, had consecrated a portion of her property to the instruction of four female children ; she associated herself in this work of charity with others, who formed together a little community. This lady profited of M. de la Salle's residence at Mende, to receive instructions which might serve as rules for this community to follow. After a residence of two months at Mende, the pious founder went to Grenoble, where the Brothers received him with great cordiality. Thus, while the Brothers of Mende lived in a state of irregularity, those of Grenoble conducted themselves as worthy children of the Institute ; their exactness in fulfilling all their duties was most exemplary, and they lived in a strict and holy union. It was not a small consolation to their good father to find even one house, such as he wished to have the whole Institute.

## CHAP. X.

NONE in Grenoble but the Brothers, were aware of his arrival; he selected a retired room, and gave himself to prayer and contemplation. Here he found himself within three leagues of a place celebrated for the penitential life led there by St. Bruno and his disciples. This great saint had also been canon of the church of Rheims. M. de la Salle visited the Great Chartreuse. It is well known, that the love of penance only could render this desert habitable. The holy priest felt enraptured at the sight of these steep rocks, which had served as a retreat to one of the principal restorers of the solitary life in the West, and which had so often re-echoed to the praises of God.

These holy solitaries gave him a courteous reception. Had they known that he was a canon of Rheims, he would have received certain honours, which were always paid at the Chartreuse to those who bore that title. However, the air of sanctity which appeared in his countenance, his extreme modesty, and the celestial mildness which beamed from his eyes, attracted a respectful attention. In his conversation with the prior, he spoke of God with such dignity and ease, as showed him the interior man, and to be penetrated with an exalted idea of the Divine perfections.

On his return to Grenoble, he shut himself up again. Though he and the Brothers were highly esteemed there, still he kept retired for some time through motives of

prudence. But a journey on which he was obliged to send one of the Brothers, compelled him to appear openly to take the place of the Brother in the school. The holy priest conducted the school with a mildness, a patience, and an application, which all those who are charged with such an employ may take as a model. No odious distinction, on his part, between the scholars; or rather, he made one which should be imitated, because it characterises true zeal, namely, that he paid particular attention to the poorest and most clownish, who in general are the most neglected. It is a defect with which masters, who are responsible equally for all, have in general to reproach themselves: so that, of one hundred scholars, they often pay attention to five or six only, and unjustly neglect the others.

The humble superior conducted the children, two-and-two, to the church; he celebrated the divine Mysteries for them; and he had so well disposed them to assist devoutly, that there was no necessity to overlook their conduct. When the Brother returned, the man of God retired to his solitude. The people were so edified at what they had seen, that they spoke of him with admiration. Many of the respectable inhabitants visited him frequently; it was only to allow him a free intercourse with God, that their visits became less frequent. He profited of this liberty to compose works of piety for his disciples, and for the children who attended the schools. During this period he revised the work called, "*The Duties of a Christian.*"

At this time, having learned that the schools of Provence had, at length, enjoyed peace, he wrote to the Brothers there to appoint prudent visitors, in order to regulate among them what the artifices of his enemies pre-

vented him of doing in person. Thus the holy man indulged in the sweets of a contemplative life only to promote thereby the welfare of the Institute. Violent attacks of rheumatism obliged him to interrupt his charitable solicitude. A little care might have impeded the progress of the complaint; accustomed to disregard his body, he diminished nothing of his austerities. The Brothers became alarmed when he was obliged to keep his bed. They had recourse to remedies, but in vain. What grieved him most was, that he was unable to offer the divine Sacrifice. During his illness in Paris, we have seen that he was miraculously able to offer it on Sundays and holydays: he was now denied this favour. As at Vaugirard, he got himself placed on two chairs, exposed to the action of a quick fire to the part affected; and in this situation, which represented that of St. Lawrence, all his occupation was to imitate the patience of that martyr, and like him, to praise God while on the gridiron.

In his sickness he was visited by the Abbé Saleon, who invited him to his country residence at Permeigne, four leagues from Grenoble. It was a solitary place, where many persons, zealous for their perfection, went annually to make a retreat. The idea of a place consecrated to a solitary life, induced him to accept the invitation. These virtuous souls were attracted thither to avail themselves of the lights of a holy shepherdess, named *Sister Louisa*, who was singularly favoured by God. There was on the summit of a mountain, a cross, to which the inhabitants of a village, situate in an adjoining valley, came yearly in procession. It was at the foot of this cross, that this holy sister had fixed her dwelling. She passed there the greater part of the days and nights in prayer; she obtained of M. Saleon permission to build there a small cottage.

The fame of her holy life spread abroad ; her revelations were spoken of ; and many desired an acquaintance with her. Permeigne was visited from many places ; and the visitors were so astonished and edified by her discourses, that many of them believed it to be the interest of their souls to take her advice, and to enjoy for some days her celestial conversation. Great numbers came during the year, to spend some days in retreat. A chapel was built there, and two houses ; one for the accommodation of men, and another for that of women.

For many years the solitude of Permeigne was celebrated, though the founder knew it not. When he arrived at the house of M. Saleon, he was agreeably surprised at what was related of Sister Louisa. Saints are mutually anxious to become acquainted ; the high idea which they form of each other, makes them solicitous for an interchange of advice.

M. de la Salle visited the mountain, and as soon as the holy sister had spoken to him, she knew that he was arrived at an exalted perfection. She saw that he was a great servant of God, and was desirous to declare to him her most secret thoughts, in order to receive his advice. She did so with a simplicity and candour, which are found only in truly humble souls conducted by the spirit of God. He exposed to her in turn the state of his soul ; all his past troubles, the contradictions which he had received, sometimes even from well-disposed men ; the uncertainty in which he was to know whether the establishment of his Institute, such as he had formed it, was a work agreeable to God, and whether it was prudent to continue what he had commenced. He declared to her what had led him to believe that it would be better to transfer the care of it to another more qualified ; in fine, that he

felt a strong inclination to withdraw from the commerce of men, and pass the rest of his days in solitude. "It is not the will of God," replied the holy sister: "you must not abandon the family of which you are the father. Labour is your inheritance; you must persevere to the end of your days."

This reply gave confidence to the humble priest; he doubted not that God's will was announced by the lips of his servant; and persuaded that as his Institute commenced with such success, though hitherto it had suffered contradictions, it was still the work of God; he no longer thought but of bringing it to perfection. After this interview he returned to M. Saleon's. He withdrew from all society, and prepared himself by meditation for all the combats which he might have to sustain. After some days passed in the sweets of a continual commerce with God, he returned to Grenoble in tolerable health.

It was after his return from Permeigne, in 1714, that the Bull *Unigenitus* was received in France. It was published in Grenoble, and in nearly every other diocese of the kingdom. The pious founder, whose sentiments on submission to the definitions of the Church had never been suspected, and who had already suffered persecutions for so just a cause, read it for the Brothers, and got them to receive it in spirit and in heart: on this occasion he delivered to them an important exhortation. In public and in private, he firmly maintained his opinion on this matter, but always with charity.

M. de la Salle having left Paris two years before this period, had reason to believe that the cause which obliged him to quit it no longer existed; but though the father of the young incumbent had lost sight of him, having taken possession of the house in St. Denis's, and the public no

longer thought of the lawsuit, nor of the false accusations with which he was charged, still he delayed his return. His object was to oblige his disciples to elect another superior, not solely to gratify his humility, but because he foresaw, that if they made not the election during his lifetime, they would not have that liberty after his death, and would be obliged to receive as superior, a secular priest, who, most probably, would cause the ruin of the Institute.

Experience had shown him, that he could not, of himself, bring the Brothers to adopt this measure ; it was after this consideration, in quitting Paris, that he made no one acquainted with his place of retreat. Though he received many letters by chance during his absence, still he gave no reply. All these letters brought him gloomy tidings of the state of the Institute ; that it was threatened with a schism, because some of the Brothers relaxed from their first fervour, and would not acknowledge the authority of Brother Bartholomew, who, in the absence of the founder, was naturally the superior. Other letters stated, that strange hands had wished to change all the constitutions of the body, and to substitute others, which evidently tended to its annihilation. It was further stated to him, that each house was to be subjected to a local ecclesiastic. Notwithstanding all this, he was silent. The more ancient and influential Brothers not daring to apply the remedy to the existing evil which M. de la Salle desired, agreed to make a new effort, which they knew he could not resist. They wrote to him in common a singular letter, which shows how much he possessed the affection of his children.

"Very dear Father,

"We, the principal Brothers of the Christian Schools, having in view the greater glory of God, the greater good of the Church, and of our own Society, deem it extremely important, that you resume the care and general guidance of God's holy work, which is also yours, since it has pleased the Lord to make you instrumental in establishing it, and in conducting it for so long a time; every person is convinced, that he has given you the necessary graces and talents to govern well this new society, which is of such utility to the Church; and it is but just, that we bear testimony of your having always conducted it with great success and edification. We therefore beseech you most humbly, and *command* you, in the name and on behalf of the whole society, to which you have promised obedience, to resume permanently the government of our society. In virtue of this, we hereto affix our signatures.

"We are, with profound respect, very dear Father,

"Your very humble and obedient subjects.

"Paris, April 1, 1714."

This letter was addressed to Grenoble, where they knew he then resided. The word *command* was a strong expression on the part of these good Brothers to their superior, who, besides, had the sacred character of priest. Far from feeling affronted at this letter, he read it with respect, as coming from God, and submitted to his adorable decrees. The few in Grenoble with whom he had intercourse, felt all the rigour of this separation; they made efforts to detain him longer; the Lord spoke—the superior obeyed.

The particular devotion he had to St. Francis of Sales, made him take his route by Lyons. He passed several

hours in prayer, where the holy bishop of Geneva had died. From Lyons he went to Dijon. His faithful disciples there felt great joy at his arrival. He remained with them only four hours, and then continued his route to Paris, where he arrived on the 10th of August.

His arrival was a day of festivity to the Brothers : those who feared that they would never more see him, felt their hopes revived. Already they began to give him an account of everything ; but he, never losing sight of what he looked upon as the greatest interest of his society, appeared to be surprised. "What!" said he, "am I still necessary for you ? Can you not manage, as during my absence ? Imagine that I am dead. What would then be your decision ? Do now what you think you should do then." He then repeated what he had already said many times, that it behoved them to put one of their body in his place.

They were so convinced that M. de la Salle only had the grace to govern them, that they continually refused his resignation. The servant of God was obliged to yield : he preserved the title of superior, but he charged Brother Bartholomew with the details of the Institute, and the exercises of the house. It is easy to see that he wished by this means to bring gradually his disciples to acquiesce in his request. He contented himself daily to say Mass for the Brothers, to hear their confessions, and on Sundays and holydays to give them an exhortation on their different duties ; he passed the rest of the time retired in his room, occupied in prayer, in reading the Holy Scriptures, and the writings of the Fathers, and in composing several little works for the use of the Brothers.

One of his old enemies manifested some surprise that he heard the confessions of the Brothers, without having,

as this malignant spirit thought, the necessary powers. The humble priest showed him the ample faculties which he had received when his Eminence, Cardinal Noailles, had taken possession of the archbishopric of Paris. Still, this evil genius sought to torment him by putting to him extremely captious questions, which required very measured replies ; because, if he replied not with the utmost caution, he exposed himself to incur the indignation of his Eminence, or that of his benefactors, the members of St. Sulpice. Though he was not obliged to answer a man who had no authority over him, still he had motives to conciliate this dangerous spirit.

About this period, there occurred an incident worthy of record. The chevalier d'Armstadt, a young lord of an illustrious house in Germany, quitting the service of the emperor, after the battle of Denain, came to France, and passing through Lyons, he delayed there for some days, to see whatever might be curious in that city. Much conversation was then at Lyons about a demoniac, who was to be exorcised : the chevalier, who was not a Catholic, and was but little disposed to believe what is called *possession*, had the curiosity to go see the exorcisms performed ; he entered the church a sceptic, pitying the credulity and simplicity of the spectators. When he approached, the demoniac, writhing in frightful contortions, thus addressed him : "Thou believest not that there are demons, but one day thou shalt feel their fury." These words were to him like a thunderbolt. It was a grace which God granted him ; he was faithful to it at the moment ; he went out in consternation, making the most mournful reflections upon his unbelief and the disorders of his life. He resolved to renounce his errors, and enter into the bosom of the Catholic Church, whose doctrine

he began to study ; and some months after, he made his abjuration to the archbishop of Lyons. Then, with the design of performing a suitable penance, he went to Paris, in order to place himself under the direction of some zealous and enlightened confessor, capable of aiding him to quit his irregularities. God led him to the community of St. Sulpice : one of the members, a virtuous priest, advised him to fortify himself still more in his good resolutions, by retiring into the house of M. de la Salle. The fervent penitent followed this counsel, and became a boarder among the Brothers, on the 8th of October, 1714.

He almost instantly wished to perform the same exercises as the novices. It was then the demon kept the promise which he had made to him at Lyons. The chevalier had received many dangerous wounds, which he had cured by means prohibited by the law of God. From the moment of his entry among the Brothers, he felt great pains, which increased daily ; he lost his rest ; he passed the night in groans, loud enough to be heard by those in the next apartments. The Brothers thought these were the groans of a converted heart. One morning he was absent from the exercises ; they went to his chamber, where they found him in bed, motionless, senseless, and weltering in his blood. Terrified at this sad spectacle, they hastened to afford him relief ; the remedies prescribed took no effect ; he remained some days motionless and speechless. They despaired of his life : he received extremeunction.

This sacrament produced a wonderful effect. Immediately his gaping wounds closed ; he recovered his speech and recollection, and next day he was able to resume the exercises of the novices : but, shortly after, he relapsed into the same state, and gave signs of life only by fright-

ful contortions, vomiting blood and rolling his eyes in a horrible manner ; he was often observed to fix his eyes upon a particular part of the chamber, to move his lips rapidly, and to make motions with his arms like to those of a man who fights, and wards off blows. He passed the whole night in these violent agitations. A vision of four hours succeeded, in which he saw, under frightful forms, a crowd of demons, who threatened to kill him, if he did not immediately quit the house. This spectacle cost him extraordinary efforts, which reduced him to such debility, that they thought he would expire at every moment. After this, he beheld the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was very devout since his conversion ; her presence dispersed the infernal troop ; she approached to console him, and in a short time he recovered.

No sooner was he in the re-enjoyment of his health, than he begged to be admitted to the habit of the Brothers, and was consequently received. The demon at this became furious, and assailed him by new torments, seizing him by the neck, and grasping him so tightly as if he would have strangled him, and thus deprived him of the power of respiration : his tongue became thick, and incapable of motion ; yet his recollection still remained, and he received the holy viaticum with marks of great devotion. The community thinking he was about to expire, recited the prayers for a departing soul. As they proceeded, the demon gradually relaxed his fury, and finally left him in health and peace.

The evil spirit, exasperated at his having embraced a life so holy and so penitent, soon returned again to the charge. One day he so moved the springs of the chevalier's imagination, that he thought he beheld the priest who advised him to join the community, Brother

Bartholomew, and the master of novices, each armed with a heavy discipline, lacerating his back in a most pitiless manner. This was to inspire him with a horror for these three men, who directed him in the affairs of his salvation. The idea remained some time engraven on his mind, without being dissuaded from its reality ; when, at length, he knew the malice of the imposture, he animated himself the more to sustain his attacks. Satan assaulted him anew ; he tore the nails from his feet ; he felt easily convinced of this fact by the testimony of his eyes ; this was seen by all the Brothers. From all these appearances M. de la Salle judged that the novice was possessed by a demon : but, as he knew a person may be deceived in such cases, he reserved his thoughts to himself ; he shut himself up in the chamber of the novice, and repeated over him the prayers of the church for demoniacs. These prayers were efficacious : the demon was forced to quit the unfortunate young man, who no longer felt his attacks, but who, very soon after, proved faithless to his vocation.

## CHAP. XI.

FRANCE felt then the greatest possible loss in the demise of Lewis XIV, to whom all nations confirmed the title of *Great*. The Institute of the Brothers, in particular, suffered by his death; it caused such a change, as obliged M. de la Salle to send his novices to St. Yon; he followed them to this place, which had for him so many charms. When he arrived there, he looked upon it as being thenceforward his resting place on earth; for he seemed to have a presentiment that he had not many years to sojourn in this vale of misery.

Though from principle he no longer interfered in the government of the Institute, he, however, paid attention to form the novices to all the great virtues peculiar to their vocation. His maxim was, not to seek great numbers so much as the goodness of the subjects. He left nothing untried with those whom he thought truly called. He mortified their self-will; but he treated them with indulgence in their weaknesses, and affectionately consoled them in their trouble. Though Brother Bartholomew was master of novices by office, yet he left the superior to perform the duties.

Towards the middle of the year 1716, Brother Bartholomew requested of him to visit the establishments at Calais and Boulogne. The willing superior set out; and when he had finished his mission, he returned. He now felt the end of his earthly career approaching, and feared

nothing more than to die superior. What passed during his long absence in Provence led him to suppose that the Brothers would be forced to receive as superior, one not of their own body. The dread that a stranger should be nominated superior, as well as his own innate humility, determined M. de la Salle to resign. He assembled the Brothers of St. Yon and Rouen ; he declared to them, that it was useless any longer to oppose his resignation. It was only on such occasions he showed the authority of a superior. He told them the many reasons which urged him to this resolution ; at the same time, he promised to aid them with his counsel to his latest breath. With reluctance they acquiesced. There was no longer question of taking measures for the election of one of the Brothers. It was agreed to convene the principal Brothers in a convenient place, that all the Brothers directors, in coming to the meeting, should have a written authority from their subjects, to approve what would be done in the general chapter, and that they should submit to him, as their superior, who would have a majority of votes.

M. de la Salle never felt more joy ; he approved these articles, and proposed means of having them executed. "That everything may be done with mildness and peace," said he to his dear children, "it is necessary to send to all the houses one of you who is respected by the Brothers, to prepare them by wise counsel, to enter into our views, by putting them in possession of the reasons which require a chapter, and the election of a superior. Before all things it is necessary to have the consent of the houses which form the Institute. With respect to the place of meeting, we cannot select one more convenient than St. Yon : here, in solitude, at full liberty, and in peace, the Brothers can assemble from all parts of France, and

they can decide agreeably to their wishes, without distraction, without obstacle, without noise or observation. If this be your opinion, name the Brother whom you wish to depute, and whom you think qualified to conduct this affair." All agreed that Brother Bartholomew had the qualifications to execute well this commission. M. de la Salle gave him instructions, and he set out in the month of December, 1716. He commenced at the most remote houses, and visited all successively ; he was received everywhere with the greatest demonstrations of joy and respect. He found all the Brothers disposed to come into his views ; and such as were not to be of the assembly, signed the necessary power for the deputies. As it was in this assembly that the Institute was to assume a form of stability, it was both wise and necessary that it should be convoked with the general consent of the body.

Two incidents are related of Brother Bartholomew's journey ; they show the protection of Heaven. On the road he fell from his horse ; one leg remained in the stirrup ; he was dragged a considerable distance in this condition, and what is extraordinary, without injury. At another time two robbers saw him alone on the highway ; they resolved to rob him. When they approached him, an invisible force restrained them ; they could not attack him. They followed him a long time ; but found their hands so pinioned, that, surprised by these difficulties, they quitted the road, and left this good Brother quite at ease, after having given him much uneasiness. He saw that the hand of God had protected him, and he gave thanks for his happy deliverance.

The successful issue of his negotiation filled the pious founder with joy : he began to prepare for the meeting. It appeared rational to defer it until the fine

season ; and besides, it was at Pentecost the meetings were hitherto held. This festival was appointed for the opening of the meeting. All the Brothers directors arrived precisely at the specified time, and entered into retreat. M. de la Salle opened it by a discourse, which showed the importance of the business for which they had assembled. Then he pointed out the manner in which they were to conduct themselves ; he drew up a form of prayer, to implore the light of the Holy Ghost. Above all, he recommended them to listen only to the voice of conscience in the choice ; to set aside all human motives, and to select before God the most worthy. On the refusal of M. de la Salle to be president, Brother Bartholomew was chosen ; and two days after, this worthy son of such a father was unanimously declared his first successor, as Superior-General of the Institute. The news was brought to the pious founder, who said exultingly, “ He merits it ; he has for a long time performed the duties of the office.” This election gave general satisfaction ; the only person displeased was the new superior. In vain did he employ tears and entreaties to change the election. The Brothers came successively, and cast themselves at his feet, to recognise his authority and promise obedience.

Two assistants were appointed to aid him with their advice. They all then continued their retreat to Trinity Sunday, the great festival of the Institute, and the day on which they renewed their vows, the ceremony of which was commenced by M. de la Salle and Brother Bartholomew. The retreat being over, the pious founder proposed to the Brothers to examine the rules, and to make all the changes and additions which they might deem prudent. Each made his observations freely ; however, it was finally agreed that they should be taken to the

late superior, to form them according to his wishes. When he had put the rules into their present state, they were sent to all the houses, signed by Brother Bartholomew, to be thenceforward religiously and uniformly observed by all the members of the Institute.

Among these rules was one which appeared objectionable to some of the Brothers. It forbade any Brother to speak at recreation, until he had first obtained permission from the Brother director ; it forbade also, not only all disputes, a high tone of voice, loud laughter, or the slightest levity, but even to converse on what might flatter curiosity. M. de la Salle proposed to refer it to the opinions of the four religious superiors in Rouen, who were most reputed for their wisdom and sanctity. Père Boudin, then rector of the Jesuits' house in Rouen, a man distinguished for his piety and prudence, was one of the arbitrators. After mature deliberation, he and the other three were unanimous that the rule should remain in its original form. A Brother observed to them, " Your houses are all well regulated, yet recreations are not so restricted ; even certain games are permitted." " Say, tolerated," replied one of the arbitrators : " it was not so at the commencement ; these customs have been insensibly introduced, and they are tolerated because it would now be too difficult to retrench them totally, though it would be desirable if it could be effected. The greatest part of the relaxation that exists among us, has arisen from that source." This reply imposed silence on the Brother, and on all those who were of his opinion ; perhaps through respect rather than conviction. However, the rule remained without any modification.

M. de la Salle regarded these rules of recreation as most important for the maintenance of discipline ; he has,

therefore, inserted in the directors' rule of office, that they should attend recreation, even in preference to prayer. Another matter which appeared to him of the utmost importance was, the conduct of the directors. He attributed in a great measure the relaxation and the deplorable decay of the most flourishing communities in former times, to the great weakness and negligence of superiors. If they were firm, vigilant, and regular, he thought numbers of orders would still be in their first fervour. He was accustomed to say, that the Institute was in the hands of the directors. Struck with this truth, he fasted, he prayed, in order to obtain from Heaven directors who might be models worthy of imitation. It is for this end he established the daily practice, in the large communities, of having a Brother fast and communicate. Some years after, the fast became general, and was observed on Fridays, without, however, being of rule, only consecrated by custom ; and the communion becoming equally general, was fixed for vacation days, or Thursdays. To oblige the Brothers directors never to relax, he required that on every Thursday their rule of office should be read publicly. These Brothers found this too humiliating, and remonstrated : he replied, that if they faithfully performed their duties, the subjects under them would respect them the more, and show the more docility.

God, who inspired him, and who wished to make him the founder of a new order in the Church, would not permit another to be the organ of his wishes. In his absence a stranger changed the rules of the Institute according to *his own* ideas ; he retrenched, he added, and took them thus mutilated to Cardinal Noailles, for approval. The cardinal censured his temerity, and requested that the rules might be left to him who had the necessary graces for their

formation. It will be seen that the rules, as drawn up by the venerable founder, shortly after received the approbation of the Holy See.

When the objects which had called the Brothers together were accomplished, the meeting separated. The new superior gave general satisfaction: the young Brothers and the old were equally pleased at the choice. Through all the trying vicissitudes of past and painful events, he displayed a great and generous mind. During the lifetime of M. de la Salle he consulted him upon every important occasion. That he mistook not the supernatural light by which his venerable father was guided, may be proved from the following incident.

M. Charon having come from Canada to Paris, solicited so often for Brothers, that, with the consent of M. de la Salle, four were promised to instruct the savages of that cheerless region. The four Brothers got notice: they were preparing to embark, when the pious founder, who had approved their journey, said to Brother Bartholomew, "My God, what is it you do? You are going to undertake a thing which will embarrass you, and have fatal consequences." The Brother superior represented to him that he had consented to their departure, and that it would now be difficult to withdraw from the engagement. The holy man repeated, "What are you going to do?" These words made a deep impression on Brother Bartholomew: the idea which he had of M. de la Salle's sanctity prevented further inquiry. Brother Bartholomew retracted his promises. M. Charon afterwards acknowledged, that he had used *finesse*, in saying in his application, that he wanted the Brothers for two schools in Canada; whereas his design was to disperse them in different parts of the country.

The news of M. de la Salle's resignation soon spread abroad : persons reasoned on it differently according as they were affected towards him. In his now inferior state he laboured to sanctify himself, and exhibited daily new examples of virtue. He was a model of obedience ; and though his superior had granted him a general dispensation, he did nothing without permission.

It was stated, that M. Roger, pressed by remorse of conscience, had, in dying, bequeathed to M. de la Salle an income of 250 livres, which he was to enjoy after the death of a servant. This servant died, and the executor knowing that the income reverted to M. de la Salle, very generously offered to pay the principal that the Brothers might purchase the house of St. Yon. It was a timely and considerable service under these circumstances. Brother Bartholomew requested M. de la Salle to go to Paris on this affair : he immediately obeyed. The notary who held the money, read the will for M. de la Salle, who was designated in it, Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He replied, that he no longer held that situation, and that if it were necessary to affix that title to his name in the receipt, he would rather lose the money than assert that which was untrue. Though the notary treated this as a vain scruple, yet it had not apparently sufficient rectitude for the pious founder. He left Paris without the money. Three months elapsed ; the notary judging that he could run no risk by not requiring the word *superior* to be added, and admiring M. de la Salle's disinterestedness, remitted him the money.

This sum amounted to 5,000 livres ; it was far, however, from being sufficient to purchase the house of St. Yon. Its situation in an open country near a city, was very convenient ; it had a considerable quantity of ground

and very extensive gardens attached, which produced all that was necessary for their support. They were on the eve of being dispossessed. The Marchioness of Louvois had just died ; her heirs set it up for sale. M. de la Salle had recourse to prayer ; the Brothers prayed and moved the heart of their celestial Father. Many who knew their difficulties, collected large donations ; the Abbé de Louvois, one of the heirs, promised to set it up at the lowest sum, and to give the Brothers a preference. Brother Bartholomew went to Paris, paid the stipulated sum, and had the lease drawn in the names of two Brothers, on whose probity he could depend. However, they were not then sufficiently protected by the law ; the letters patent which they obtained in the reign of Lewis XV, completely shielded them from their enemies.

By this affair M. de la Salle was detained in Paris from 4th October, 1717, to 7th March, 1718. During this time, he lodged at the seminary of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, and was a model for all the young ecclesiastics ; he subjected himself to the discipline, and to all the exercises of the seminary. The good president wished to detain him ; but he followed Brother Bartholomew to Rouen, having previously taken leave of the Brothers in Paris, never more to see them. Nothing could be more affecting than this separation. Arrived at Rouen, he thought only of preparing for death.

At this period he composed some little spiritual works ; among others, that called *Explanation of the Method of Prayer*. The boarders of St. Yon also engaged his attention. There were two classes of them : one was composed of unruly profligates, shut up by order of the king, or their parents, to atone for past offences, and prevent fatal consequences ; the other of children, whose

parents confided their education to the Brothers. It may easily be supposed, the first were managed with difficulty ; they were carefully guarded in a separate wing, which had no communication with the rest of the house. The pious founder had great commiseration for these unhappy youths. He exhorted them to repentance ; he spoke to them of the terrible judgments of God, and the eternity of hell's punishments. Some, to obtain their enlargement, assumed an appearance of conversion ; others gave unequivocal proofs of a sincere change : for, being set at liberty, they either became members of religious orders, or lived with great edification in the world. The boarders of the second class were the delight of the pious founder. He heard their confessions ; he loved the innocence of their age, and frequently visited them. He accommodated himself to their character, by relating to them pious stories, thus infusing into them principles of virtue. If any of them committed a fault, he reproved the offender with kindness, and thereby gained his confidence.

M. de la Salle passed thus at St. Yon, his days in apparent tranquillity ; but the Lord, who wished to raise him to a high degree of sanctity by long suffering, permitted frequent subjects for his trial. Those who are called *Lay Brothers* in other orders, are designated *Serving Brothers* in this Institute. One of these, whose attendance was necessary for M. de la Salle, treated him with the greatest insolence. For twelve months the saint bore this treatment without complaint ; at length, a just remorse drew from the Brother himself the avowal of his guilt, and a glorious testimony to the saint's virtue.

It was said, that M. Daubigné, archbishop of Rouen, came to that city prejudiced against the pious founder. His prejudices were heightened by the curé of St. Severus,

for non-attendance at his parish chapel on Sundays and holydays. On several occasions the archbishop treated M. de la Salle in the most humiliating manner ; patience was the only resource of the good abbé. A grand-vicar, who had the confidence of the archbishop, charged M. de la Salle with having been on an occasion guilty of an untruth. A canon, who happened to be present, resented this slander, went directly to M. de la Salle, and heard the matter satisfactorily explained. The archbishop, however, thought the alleged crime a sufficient cause to deprive the abbé of faculties ; and appointed the canon to be the bearer of this painful message to M. de la Salle, who was then attacked with his last sickness. He declined : but he exhorted the abbé to receive this painful announcement with resignation. Another executed the commission. The servant of God kept this a secret, to prevent murmurs in his community.

For a month previously he languished from the rheumatism, which had never been radically cured. From his habitual infirmity, and an asthma, he breathed with difficulty. He saw, with joy, his mortal course drawing to a termination. The interior peace of his soul was uninterrupted. Finding himself no longer in a state to continue his exercises of zeal, he replied thus to a Brother, from whom he had recently received a letter: “ I beseech you, for the love of God, my dear Brother, that in future you address yourself not to *me*; you have superiors, to whom you should communicate your affairs, spiritual and temporal. Henceforward, I wish to think only of death, which is to separate me from all creatures.” It was his last letter. Though his infirmities daily increased, he was resolved to keep the fast of Lent. The Brothers represented to him the necessity of attention to his infirmities :

he replied, "The victim is ready to be immolated ; it must be purified." Brother Bartholomew was obliged to interpose his authority. Hopes were entertained of his recovery ; but the fall of a door caused him such a violent head-ache, that all these hopes vanished.

His confidence in God gave him strength above the weakness of his body ; he arose ; he said Mass ; he sustained himself thus for fifteen days. Towards mid-lent he was obliged to take to his bed. "I hope," said he, "that I shall be shortly delivered from Egypt, to be introduced into the true promised land of the elect." He had a particular devotion to St. Joseph. He desired to celebrate Mass on his festival ; and though his weakness was an impediment, by a special favour, his strength returned on that day, and he was enabled to offer up the holy Sacrifice. In the evening a new change took place in his body ; he returned to his former debility. On Tuesday in Holy Week, he became worse, and anxiously asked for the Viaticum. On Wednesday, when the hour had arrived to receive his Lord, he put on a surplice and stole, and sat up ; but when the Holy Sacrament entered, he, by an impetuous movement of fervour, cast himself on his knees to adore the Sovereign Majesty. On the next day he received extreme-unction. The bed was surrounded by his brethren and several externs who came to witness his happy death. He told many persons present what was hidden in their souls—a matter which excited in them great surprise. A secular, who was present, wishing to test the lights of the holy man, asked what he thought of *him* : he replied, "It is your own fault if you be not saved, for God showers his favours on you ; yet you reject them. You follow not the path which leads to him ; you bury the talents which

have been given you." These words expressed the real state of this man, as he humbly acknowledged.

In a disconsolate group the Brothers surrounded his bed, and begged from him a parting exhortation. "I recommend first," said he, "my soul to God, and then all the Brothers of the society. I recommend to them, above all things, to have always an entire submission to the Church, particularly in these degenerate days ; and to give proofs of this by never being disunited in anything from our Holy Father the Pope, and the Church of Rome. Let them always remember, that I have sent to Rome two Brothers, to ask of God the grace that the society may be always entirely submissive to his Holiness. Further, I recommend to them, to have great devotion towards our Lord, to love holy communion and the exercise of prayer ; and to have a particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and to St. Joseph, the patron and protector of our society. Let them acquit themselves of their duties with zeal and disinterestedness ; let them be closely united among themselves, and pay to the superior a blind obedience, which is the basis and support of all perfection in a community."

He had much difficulty in pronouncing these last words ; his voice became considerably weaker. Brother Bartholomew succeeded in making him give his benediction, not only to all the Brothers present, but to all those of the Institute. This tender father of a numerous family, like an ancient patriarch, raised his eyes and hands to Heaven, and said, " May the Lord bless you all." Towards evening, he lost his recollection. They recited the prayers of the agonising. He revived : it was a moment granted to him by God, to inspire his disciples with a horror of the world. " If you desire," said he, " to persevere, and die in your

holy state, never hold any intercourse with世俗者；for, little by little, you will feel pleased with their manner of acting, and you will enter so freely into their conversations, that you will not be able, even from policy, to withhold your applause from their discourse, though very pernicious: this will cause in you a disrelish of your vocation; and not being any longer faithful in observing your rules, you will become disgusted with your state, and you will finally abandon it."

A cold sweat succeeded, and prevented him from saying more; he relapsed into his agony; it lasted from midnight to half-past two in the morning. Then he appeared to resume a little strength: it was suggested to him to implore the assistance of the Mother of God, by saying this prayer of the Church, "*Maria, Mater gratiæ;*" a prayer which he was always accustomed to recite at the close of the day. The Brother superior asked him if he accepted with joy the pains which he suffered: he replied, "Yes, I adore in all things the will of God in my regard." These were the last words he uttered; he fell again into his agony at half-past three in the morning: he had some convulsions; however, tranquillity and confidence appeared in his countenance. Towards four o'clock he made an effort to rise, as if to meet some person; he joined his hands together, raised his eyes to Heaven, and surrendered his spirit into the hands of his Creator, the same day on which the Saviour died on the cross for the salvation of man. Thus died, the death of the saints, on the 7th April, 1719, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, John Baptist de la Salle, founder of the Society of Brothers of the Christian Schools.

## CHAP. XII.

IT must be acknowledged, that this great servant of God was a man animated with an apostolic zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ and the salvation of his neighbours. His noble generosity of soul appeared in the heroic sacrifices which he made ; and his profound humility by the insensibility with which he received the grossest and most painful insults. His mortification was continual, and his confidence in God and resignation to his gracious providence, boundless. The alleged defects in his character were rather perfections ; and what might have been considered obstinacy and imprudence, were but firmness, incapable of betraying the cause of God, and a participation of celestial wisdom, which confounds human prudence. In a word, M. de la Salle was a model of the most sublime virtues, a man precious to the Church by his labours, and by those of a new institute, with which he has enriched it ; and seeming to reproduce himself in his children, he daily acquires new claims to public gratitude.

He was born with a delicate constitution, which subsequently became strengthened by coarse diet and fatigue. Excessive austerities only could have undermined it, and rendered it subject to great infirmities. His body was well proportioned ; he had a large forehead, a sharp nose, large and beautiful eyes, almost blue ; the lines of his face were mild and agreeable, his voice strong, an exterior, cheerful, serene, and modest ; a complexion a little bronzed

by frequent journeys, and ordinarily animated by a slight flush of vermillion. His curled hair, of a chesnut colour in his youth, became white with years, and thus rendered him venerable. His manners were pleasing, and genteel without affectation; in fine, all appeared amiable in his person, and inspired piety.

The news of his death created a deep sensation in the city of Rouen. Crowds came to see a saint, who had been during life regarded with indifference, often even with contempt. God renders sooner or later to virtue the homage which it merits. Of this M. de la Salle was a splendid example. After his decease his countenance was more beautiful than it had been when living. Every person wished to have a memorial of so great a servant of God. Some Brothers had already possessed themselves of what they had found belonging to him; all the riches of the deceased consisted in a crucifix, a New Testament, an Imitation of Jesus Christ, a beads, and a Breviary. The vigilant and the active only could seize anything. The others, afflicted for having been anticipated, had recourse to his poor clothes, which they rent in pieces. Externs claimed a right to a booty which they deemed most precious. Some, to indemnify themselves for the loss which they had sustained, cut locks of his hair, and preserved them with great respect. After each had satisfied his devotions, the body was taken to the parish of St. Severus, and was interred there in the chapel of St. Susanna; a prodigious concourse of people was the only circumstance which gave pomp to his funeral.

M. de la Salle having died on Good-Friday, the honours claimed by the veneration in which he was held, could not then be paid to his memory. They were deferred to the Monday after Low-Sunday. A numerous body of

clergy, composed principally of priests from the little seminary of St. Patrick's, celebrated on that day a solemn service, at which many persons of distinction and piety attended. Many having confidence in the prayers of a man whom they regarded as a saint, invoked his assistance ; and God vouchsafed by many miraculous effects to show, that he heard the prayers offered through the intercession of his servant. In speaking thus, it is in submission to the decree of his Holiness, Pope Urban VIII ; nor is it presumed to anticipate the judgment of the Church herein.

Brother Bartholomew, inconsolable at the death of his good father, endeavoured to prolong his existence in some measure on earth, by collecting all the reminiscences connected with his life, interrogating for this purpose all who had the happiness of a close intercourse with him, while yet they were fresh in their recollection. From the faithful records then made, and from a great number of depositions, this life of M. de la Salle has been compiled.

All good men lamented the death of the pious founder. The superiors and professors of St. Nicholas de Chardonnet felt sensibly afflicted when the fatal news was announced to them by the Brother superior. One of them replied thus to his letter :

“ My dear Brother,

“ It is with great sorrow I have received your letter respecting the death of your most honoured father, M. de la Salle. This had already been announced to me by M. de la Vertu. I have shared in the sorrow of this news ; I have recommended him to the prayers of the community. We have all united with you to pray for the dear deceased, whom we regard as a saint, who prays for us in Heaven. I believe your community can never want,

having such a protector with the Lord ; you know better than any other person the sanctity of his life, and the trials he has borne for your establishment; an evident mark that it is the work of God. I hope by his prayers, and your co-operation, that it will attain stability.

" We had the happiness of being edified by his presence for more than six months that he did us the honour of living among us : I believe God had sent him here to preach to our youth by his example, and to withdraw us from our relaxation. His life here was most humble and mortified ; he slept little, and prayed much. During the sharpest cold in winter, he was always found one of the earliest up in the morning. In that season he never used a stove, but when it was sent to him by force ; this rarely occurred, as my hours and his were not uniform. He daily made three hours' meditation. He was more regular than the most exact of the scholars in obeying, with edifying promptitude, the slightest sound of the bell, which called to the exercises. He was so submissive, that he fatigued the *prefect* from asking permissions which were granted even to the students. He yielded so voluntarily to the requests which solicited him to assist at the *convois* of charity or the interment of children, that he showed these were to him subjects of satisfaction ; in a word, retreat, prayer, charity, humility, and mortification, were all his delight. I hope that his death will not estrange me from the affections of your community, and that you will always honour me by placing me among your friends."

The Brothers, on learning the death of their father, gave proofs of their great sensibility ; they looked upon themselves as abandoned orphans ; the Brother superior, who wanted consolation so much himself, had recourse to

all the motives which religion furnishes, to console others. "Contristate not the spirit of the Lord which is in you," said he, to one of the Brothers, "by an immoderate sorrow for the death of our dear father. I know not how I feel ; I am at once sorrowful and joyful ; the odour of his holy life, joined to the recollection of many extraordinary things which happened at his death, afford me consolation. Be then more cheerful ; for the sorrow which comes not from the impulse of the Holy Ghost, is dangerous, and fatal in its consequences."

Whatever subject of sorrow the death of M. de la Salle might have been to his disciples, it appears certain that it procured them many advantages. To his prayers in Heaven may be attributed in some measure the success which subsequently attended the Institute. To judge of things humanly, the Institute appeared to be threatened with the greatest misfortunes after his death. The factions which he happily silenced in returning from Provence, might revive ; or his enemies, restrained by his presence, might renew their intrigues to attack the election of Brother Bartholomew, and have it annulled by ecclesiastical superiors ; or if they failed in this, it was to be feared, that at least they might excite a schism in the Institute, by turning aside many subjects from the obedience which they had promised to a superior of their own choice. It was possible that these evil-minded men might find Brothers directors inclined to independence, jealous of an authority more extensive than their own, and that they should be controlled by one of their own equals. Happily no such thing occurred. On the contrary, it never met less opposition exteriorly than when it appeared the most unprotected and delivered over to its own weakness ; it never had more interior union and subordination, on which

particularly its stability depended. These are palpable proofs that the Lord looked on it as the work of his own hands, and that he watched over its preservation.

Private superiors were exempt from ambition and rivalry; they were content with the small portion of the flock confided to them; they thought only of giving to their subjects the example of a perfect submission to the superior-general. Brother Bartholomew on his part conducted himself with uncommon prudence; he manifested no pleasure at being obeyed or elevated above others. Modesty was one of his leading virtues; he never assumed the tone of command; and suggested rather than ordered.

Such conduct gained him the hearts of the Brothers, and confirmed them in obedience. As they could no longer be governed by M. de la Salle, they saw no person more worthy of being at their head than Brother Bartholomew. They felt the advantage of being subject to one of their own body, who was formed in the same school, and who had the real interests of their society only in view: they congratulated themselves then on having yielded to the pressing solicitations of their father, to give him a successor while living. Their joy, however, at seeing him so happily replaced, was not of long duration; fourteen months after the death of the first superior-general they lost the second. This was a new source of sorrow, and a new subject of fear for the stability of the Institute. Then indeed it was abandoned to the discretion of its enemies; it was an unprotected ruin, whose outworks had been demolished.

The two Brothers who had been given as assistants to the superior-general, proved, on this occasion, the discernment of those who selected them for the situation. Without loss of time they wrote to all the houses a cir-

cular, by which they announced the sorrowful news, and requested all the directors to attend immediately at St. Yon, for the election of a Brother superior. The consternation was general; the summons to attend at St. Yon was received with respect, and eighteen directors set out without delay.

A canon of Rouen, who enjoyed the confidence of Brother Bartholomew, having asked him some days before his death, whom he desired should succeed him, replied, "Brother Timothy, director of the house of Avignon." This canon seeing the directors had assembled for the election of a superior, declared to some of the principal Brothers the object of Brother Bartholomew's choice. It was a strong recommendation; but the acknowledged merit of the Brother rendered it superfluous. Brother Timothy, though still young, had already, on many occasions, given proofs of rare wisdom, great capacity for business, a meekness, and an evenness of soul, which strips authority of all that is revolting, and clothes it with amiability. He had already signalised himself by his talent for governing; and he appeared moreover to possess in an eminent degree the virtues peculiar to his state.

The assembled directors, after a short deliberation, unanimously elected Brother Timothy to the office of superior-general. Brother Timothy was the only one who testified no approval of the choice. At first he believed they had made a mistake in announcing his name, being persuaded that they could not have selected the youngest of the whole assembly. But he was shown the scrutiny, and then convinced by his own eyes; he was really grieved to receive an honour, of which he thought himself unworthy. With tears he represented his in-

capacity ; he prayed ; he conjured the Brothers to revoke their suffrages, and to recommence the election. No Brother was tempted to hear his prayers ; they endeavoured only to console him, and to make the burden as light as possible to him, by promising perfect submission to his orders and great exactness in the discharge of their duties. The Brothers had subsequently to congratulate themselves on their choice. It is under the government of this Brother that the Institute obtained the greatest advantages, which were the result of his address and prudence.

The first act by which the new superior rendered his government valuable to the Institute, was, by securing to it the peaceable possession of St. Yon. It is true, that it was purchased and paid for, but in the name of two Brothers, one of whom died ; the second was aged and infirm ; if he died, St. Yon would revert to its ancient proprietor, and the Brothers be obliged to yield possession. This would have been a considerable loss to the society, and consequently, it was rendering an important service to prevent such a misfortune. For this purpose he drew up a memorial, in which he showed the justice of his claim to St. Yon, and the irreparable injury the loss of such a house would be to the Institute, which had by the Divine blessing rendered valuable service to religion and to the public. He dwelt on the near danger which threatened it ; and that all its security lay in the aged Brother, who could not live long. When he had this memorial drawn up in detail, he entrusted it to M. Pontcarré, first president of the parliament of Normandy, and a great protector to the Institute. This illustrious magistrate approved of it, and promised to support it with his influence. In effect, he interested in this affair

M. de Besons, archbishop of Rouen, who was then in Paris ; he besought him to protect the Brothers who rendered such services to his diocess : the prelate consented to support them in the request.

After this successful commencement, Brother Timothy hastened to present his memorial to M. d'Aguesseau, chancellor of France. This magistrate required the consent of the *Maison-de-Ville* of Rouen, and that the mayors and sheriffs of that city should be consulted. M. de Pontcarré spoke to them in favour of the Brothers, and the magistrates gave their written consent. This and every other necessary document were sent forward. Nothing seemed now to impede the conclusion of this affair to the satisfaction of the Brothers. They furnished more documents than were even required ; but it occurs sometimes that the most just causes are postponed, even at the time when they most promise a happy termination. The chancellor, at the joint request of M. de Besons and of M. de Pontcarré, became solicitor for the Brothers with the regent.

Prejudices had been created in the mind of the prince against the Brothers ; he rejected their request. This occurred in 1721. On the following year their hopes revived, when M. Fleurian d'Armenonville, a zealous supporter of every good undertaking, became keeper of the seals. The Abbé de St. Aubin procured access for them to his person ; he assured them of his protection, but it was necessary to produce their documents again. A secretary to the late keeper of the seals retained their former papers : he intended to injure the cause of the Brothers, and refused the papers. This obliged them to draw up a new memorial, and to recur once more to MM. de Besons and de Pontcarré, in order to solicit again the

consent of the *Maison-de-Ville* of Rouen. When this was obtained, persons of the first distinction interceded for the Brothers with those who composed the council. These gentlemen forcibly showed the national utility of an Institute devoted to the education of poor children, and unanimously requested letters-patent from the regent. His Royal Highness still prepossessed, was astonished at the number and respectability of the advocates. He felt great reluctance to refuse them; yet he hesitated, and took a middle course, by saying, that delay was necessary.

In 1723, the same individuals renewed their supplication to the duke of Orleans: he gave them an evasive reply. M. de Beson, the archbishop, had just died. The regent pretended the necessity of having the consent of the archbishop; the Brothers should therefore await the appointment of a new prelate. It was only towards the close of the year that M. de Tressan, bishop of Nantes, was nominated archbishop of Rouen.

This prelate was one of the regent's counsellors; he was also one of the Brothers' protectors. He promised them all kinds of good offices when in possession of his diocese; but unfortunately he assigned them too remote a period: the danger of losing St. Yon became greater every day. The Brother on whose life the term depended, became sensibly weaker; Brother Timothy resolved to send this Brother in person to plead the cause of the Institute. He was a venerable old man: he arrived at Fontainbleau, then the residence of the court. His pale and meagre visage, and his languishing air, convinced all who felt interested for the Institute, that there was no time to be lost in securing for the Brothers the important possession.

M. de Tressan was sensible of the danger in which they were of losing St. Yon, and presented their request at the

first council. It was held on the 28th September, 1724, all who composed it were of opinion that letters-patent should be granted. The king, then of age, looked at Cardinal Fleury to know his opinion. His eminence, who held in particular esteem the Institute of the Christian Schools, told his Majesty that the solicited favour was worthy of his bounty, that the society in question merited his royal protection. Immediately, this prince, heir to the zeal of his august ancestors, and to their love of religion, granted to the house of St. Yon, the long-desired favour ; ordering that the letters-patent should be expedited, and become available, when M. de Tressan should have taken possession of his diocese. The delay was but for three months, and the Brother fortunately survived that period.

The letters had yet to be registered by the parliament, and by the *Chambre des Comptes* of Rouen. Independently of any other reason, the parliament, in concession to the president, registered them without opposition. It was not so in the *Chambre des Comptes*. The curé of St. Severus thought it his duty to oppose their registry ; he dared not to interfere with the parliament, but he resolved to give his opposition when they were brought to the other sovereign court. In this interval he prejudiced the judges in his favour, by representing to them the injury which he would sustain by the registration of these letters. The greater number yielded to his reasons, and promised him support ; but a powerful protector of the Brothers changed their sentiments. However, after recording the letters-patent, the counsel for the curé had the liberty to reply ; he did so to the detriment of the Brothers. His discourse revived the first impressions in the minds of the judges ; all that M. de Captot, solicitor-

general, could obtain by an eloquent discourse, was, that the letters should be registered with modifications, very mortifying, yet honourable to the Brothers ; but these painful modifications were shortly after annulled by a decree of the council established by the interposition of the great protector of the Institute. The letters-patent being granted and registered, secured to the Brothers a fixed state in the kingdom.

About the same time the Brother superior obtained an advantage still more considerable—an advantage which M. de la Salle earnestly sought during his mortal career ; namely, to have the rules of the Institute approved by the Sovereign Pontiff, and to place it among the number of religious orders. This was accomplished in the following manner :—Among the Brothers there was one who had been formerly in the employment of the prince de Soubise, father to Cardinal Rohan ; he was admitted by M. de la Salle, about the year 1707. On account of his amiability, the illustrious house of Soubise held him in great esteem. The appointment of Cardinal Rohan to the embassy of Rome, was the most favourable occasion this Brother could desire of being serviceable to the Institute : he presented his superior to his Eminence, that he might use his influence with the Pope to have the Institute placed among the religious orders. The cardinal received the Brothers with great kindness, and promised cheerfully to comply with their requests. The Abbé Virant was to accompany him in this embassy ; and his Eminence requested of him to remind him of the affair.

The abbé faithfully executed this commission. When the cardinal arrived in Rome, having found Clement XI dead, he remained but a short time, and returned to France. The interests of the Brothers were not neglected :

before parting from Rome, the abbé, on the part of their cardinal, placed the rules in the hands of influential persons, and earnestly besought them to solicit the approbation of his Holiness, when circumstances would permit. Pope Innocent XIII died shortly after his accession to the Pontificate. This event recalled Cardinal Rohan to Rome, to attend the conclave. The Abbé Virant accompanied him again ; he employed his friends, and arranged everything to have the Bulls expedited. He was scarcely returned to Paris when the rules were approved by Benedict XIII, and the Institute raised to the dignity of a religious order. The Bulls were despatched towards the close of January, 1725.

## CHAP. XIII.

It may be remarked, that the Lord, who permitted M. de la Salle to be incessantly thwarted during his lifetime, crowned all his desires upon earth after his death. The pious founder had desired three things :

1. That his Institute might become a religious order.
2. That his rule might be approved, such as he had drawn it up, without addition or diminution.
3. That it might not be united to any other more ancient order of the Church.

All these were obtained : the Institute of the Brothers is a religious order distinct from all others ; it has its peculiar constitutions, and has no connexion with any other order, except that prescribed by Christian charity.

The Bulls of approval were presented to the king's council, and accepted without opposition. The letters-patent of this acceptance were drawn up and sealed, and then registered in the parliament, on the 12th May, 1725. It now became necessary to call an extraordinary meeting, which might represent the entire body of the Institute, to receive solemnly the Bulls of Benedict XIII. Brother Timothy summoned for this purpose all the directors and some ancient Brothers : they arrived at St. Yon on the appointed day ; and the meeting was opened on the 6th August of the same year : on that day the Bulls were received in presence of the most Holy Sacrament.

This ceremony was performed by the Brothers with the

greatest respect; a holy joy beamed on their countenances. To prepare themselves for the three vows of religion, they remained in retreat until the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. The conductors of the grand seminary in Rouen, with MM. Bodin and Malescot, successively delivered to them discourses on the signal favour which God had granted to the Institute, on the degree of perfection which it would acquire by that favour, and the obligation of the members to render themselves worthy of it by redoubled fervour and regularity. On the feast of the Assumption, the Abbé Robinet, then canon of the cathedral and grand-vicar of Rouen, after having said Mass and made a moving exhortation, received, as commissary to his Holiness, the vows of the Brothers, who pronounced them successively.

Before the meeting separated, it was decreed that the rules of the Institute should be printed, to prevent any change that relaxation might introduce in the course of time. The Brothers decreed also many regulations relative to the discipline, which tended to maintain the observance of these rules in all their vigour. Among other things they prohibited the use of tobacco and snuff in the society; and this article was regarded of such importance, that any postulant who would not conform to it, could not be admitted.

After this event, so important to the Institute, it has felt more and more the effects of the Lord's benediction. It is particularly at St. Yon, that these salutary effects have been visible. This house, which may be regarded as the head of the order, became daily more flourishing, as M. de la Salle predicted on the evening previous to his death. The Brothers, with the funds which Providence had sent them, erected extensive buildings and a beautiful church.

Brother Timothy, after God, the soul and the support of these glorious enterprises, translated the body of the holy founder into the church, and deposited it in the sanctuary, where the Lord has often vouchsafed to manifest the power of his servant in Heaven. The history of this translation appears sufficiently interesting to give it in detail.

The Brothers of St. Yon felt sensible pain at being deprived of the mortal remains of their venerable founder. They ardently desired to recover this treasure: many obstacles hitherto opposed these desires; for without Bulls of approbation and letters-patent, they were not recognised by the Church or state as religious. Their house was poor, their chapel was small, and almost in ruins. Amid so many difficulties, how could they think of claiming and translating to their residence, the body of M. de la Salle? God, in his goodness, soon removed these difficulties. Lewis XV, in 1724, confirmed the society, by granting to it letters-patent; Pope Benedict XIII, by a Bull, granted in 1725, raised the Institute to a religious order. Encouraged by these favours, the Brothers undertook the buildings, and happily succeeded.

The church being finished in 1734, the Brothers solicited Nicholas de Saulx-Tavares, then archbishop of Rouen, to grant them the remains of their sainted father. The prelate received their request favourably, and permitted the exhumation of the remains out of the church of St. Severus, the curé of which gave them also his influence. The day of the ceremony being fixed for the 16th July, of the above year, the superior-general informed the Brothers through France of it, and invited them to this species of festival, in which they could not but feel interested. As they received the circular in time, it afforded them a facility to be in Rouen at the appointed period:

they arrived in great numbers ; and it was not to them a slender consolation, to render anew the last sad duties to the holy priest, to whom many among them were indebted for their admission into the Institute.

On the 16th July, about three o'clock, p.m., M. Bridel, vicar-general of Rouen, came to the church of St. Severus, accompanied by many clergymen and some members of parliament : the tomb of M. de la Salle was opened in his presence. The body was found entire ; but his sacerdotal ornaments were decayed. Corruption had spared the tassel of his square cap, his shoes, and the little wooden cross, which had been placed between his hands. All these were taken away with a pious solicitude by the assistants, who wished to preserve them as relics. When the body had been exhumed, and a verbal process of the state in which it was found had been drawn up, the procession commenced its route ; it was composed of more than 300 ecclesiastics, all in surplices, and holding lighted tapers. The body was borne by sixteen ecclesiastics, in surplices and stoles, and four canons from the metropolis held the corners of the pall. To maintain good order among the immense crowds that assisted at this solemn ceremony, troops were placed in files, between which the clergy walked. When the procession approached the house of St. Yon, the Brothers went out to meet it, carrying lighted tapers, and joining their prayers to the solemn psalms used by the Church on such occasions. Shortly after the entry of the body into the church, the president of the parliament, several magistrates and ladies of distinction, who had just arrived, expressed a desire to see the holy body. The coffin was opened to satisfy their pious curiosity : M. Bridel, who officiated, blessed the vault, and the precious remains were deposited therein on the same

evening. Next day the archbishop consecrated the chapel, and celebrated in it the first Mass. The venerable servant of God was beatified by Pope Gregory XVI, in 1842.

If the Brothers have preserved with care among them the body of their venerable founder, they have kept his spirit with still greater fidelity : the history of their Institute during the last century furnishes us with an edifying instance of a religious order, which has lost nothing of its primitive fervour.

The Bull which approved the Institute, ordained that a general chapter should be held every ten years. When M. de la Salle's body was translated, nine years only had elapsed since the chapter of 1725 ; but the circumstance of the translation was too favourable not to profit of it, on account of the great number of Brothers then in Rouen. They considered that holding it on this occasion, the expense, the inconvenience, and the fatigue of a new journey, would be saved : it was therefore held ; but they decreed, that the next should not be convoked until 1745. This latter was assembled at Rheims. In respect for the memory of M. de la Salle, they selected Rheims, being the place of his nativity ; they had also in view not to trespass on the house of St. Yon, which was not then in affluence, on account of the high price of provisions during the preceding years, and the great number of sick Brothers it contained. Brother Timothy, the superior-general, thought to fix his residence at Rheims ; but the project was abandoned, and St. Yon continued the residence of the general until 1770 : it was then changed to Paris, and subsequently to Melun.

The three general chapters which followed that of Rheims, formed very few regulations ; indeed many were

unnecessary, so great was the fervour of the Brothers. The religious spirit which reigned among them, upheld the observance of the rules; and under a worthy superior-general, who revived in his person the virtues of M. de la Salle, the Institute fulfilled faithfully the views of its holy founder. This excellent superior thus governed the society until 1751; at this period, finding himself enfeebled by age and infirmities, he requested and obtained leave to resign, in a chapter which he assembled for that purpose at St. Yon. Freed from the burden of superior, he occupied himself solely with the thoughts of death, which he regarded as not very remote. In fine, he terminated his career at St. Yon, on the 7th January, 1752, at the age of seventy years, after having governed the Institute, with ability and wisdom, for thirty-one years, during which he established over seventy houses. Brother Claude, then director of Avignon, was appointed successor to Brother Timothy. The new superior walked in the footsteps of his predecessor; his advanced age made him sigh after retirement. However, he could not obtain his resignation; though in 1761, ten years after his election, he warily solicited it in the chapter which he assembled according to rule. All his solicitations were useless; they permitted him, however, to select a sufficient number of assistants to lighten his labours. Being constrained to accede to their wishes, he governed the Institute until 1767. His infirmities having then greatly increased, he was obliged to assemble a new chapter, which at length accepted his long-tendered resignation. He survived this period eight years, and died at St. Yon, on the 25th October, 1775, at the age of eighty-five years.

The Brothers selected as his successor, Brother Florence, procurator-general of the Institute. His firmness,

his ardent zeal for discipline, happily tempered with meekness, endeared him to all, and qualified him to discharge faithfully the duties of his office. In 1777, ten years after his election, to the great affliction of the Brothers assembled in chapter, he resigned. The tears and supplications of his Brethren could not shake his resolution ; they resolved therefore to give him a successor. Brother Florence, after his resignation, was appointed as director of the house in Avignon : such was the regularity with which he conducted that house, that it continued what it always had been, the good odour of Jesus Christ to the other houses of that district. He governed it up to the period of the revolution.

At the first scrutiny for the election of a new superior, all the suffrages were in favour of Brother Agathon, president of the meeting, and the soul of its operations. The chapter then turned its attention to the reformation of some slight abuses which had crept into some of the houses, and to devising means of support for the old and infirm, that they might not be burdensome to particular houses, the greater part of which had hardly the necessary resources for the School Brothers. The chapter provided for those decayed Brothers a fund, by means of a voluntary subscription from all the houses in good circumstances. It decreed also the establishment of a school in Melun, in which the training and education of the young Brothers should be completed. Many excellent masters were produced by this school. In fine, as the permanence and prosperity of the Institute depend on the qualities of the subjects admitted to it, the chapter, convinced of this truth, made the wisest regulations for the admission of postulants, and for the conduct of directors and sub-directors of the novitiates : it ordered

frequent examinations of the novices, to ascertain their capacity and qualifications for the discharge of the duties of the Institute. The assembly closed its labours by confirming what had been decreed by the preceding general chapters.

Shortly after the dissolution of this meeting, when the most pressing affairs had been despatched, Brother Agathon made a general visit of the Institute, to know the state of each house in particular. This visit convinced him of two things—first, that the Institute preserved its primitive fervour, and that the majority of its members discharged with zeal the duties of their vocation : secondly, that many houses, particularly those long established, were in great want ; for, since their foundation, the price of provisions having greatly advanced, their revenue, which remained always fixed, could not procure for the Brothers the mere necessaries of life ; they were, therefore, forced to adopt measures not always according to the spirit of the rule. Brother Agathon undertook to remedy these evils without being dismayed at the difficulties of the undertaking, all which he overcame by his fortitude and address, and had the consolation to see his efforts crowned with the most happy success.

It is not intended to follow this worthy superior through all the details of his administration ; it is sufficient to say, that he excited the zeal of his children by his own ardour. The circular letters which he wrote are replete with such solid and suitable instructions, that they enjoy in the Institute an authority almost equal to the rule ; they form a species of commentary upon it, and a supplement to its omissions. Besides these, he has written instructive letters on the obligation of the vows. They are dictated with much precision ; they anticipate nearly all the diffi-

culties which can occur relative to these important matters. He also composed the excellent treatise, entitled, "*The Explanation of the Twelve Virtues of a good Master;*" a valuable work, which is, as it were, the manual of the Brothers, and merits to be studied by all who consecrate themselves to the education of youth. In fine, he published an excellent "*Treatise on Arithmetic,*" for the use of the boarders and the Christian Schools. He left in manuscript several other works, which have not been published.

The writings of Brother Agathon, and his abilities in governing the Institute, obtained for him the respect and esteem of all classes in society. The bishops of France and the civil authorities testified their high opinion of him on several occasions. The esteem in which he was held by the Brothers was manifested in a marked manner in 1787, when, according to custom, he assembled the chapter, and requested to be removed from office: all their voices were unanimously against the request, so that he lost all hopes of attaining what his humility had made him hope for. An object which particularly engaged the attention of Brother Agathon, was the boarders received by the Institute. When M. de la Salle rented the house of St. Yon, from Madame de Louvois, he and the Brothers were obliged to take charge of some young profligates, probably at the desire of M. Pont Chartran, minister of state under Lewis XIV. By the daily visits of this minister to the gardens of St. Yon, for relaxation from his important labours, he witnessed the meekness and the regularity of the Brothers. This charge became more weighty when Brother Bartholomew purchased the house.

The Brothers were obliged by authority to continue

admitting to St. Yon, prodigals of distinguished families, and shortly after, men of the same condition, who, by their bad conduct and dissipated character, had merited to be separated from society, and deprived of a liberty which they had too often abused. The establishment of the same kind at Angers owed its commencement to similar causes; for the house called *Du Sabot*, contained some of these outcasts, when the Brothers were first placed there. When the house called *La Rossignolerie*, was built by Brother Lewis, architect, at the expense of the Institute, the pension establishment at Du Sabot was transferred to this new house, with all the Brothers. Mareville, in Lorraine, possessed a similar establishment.

In a second class of pension houses, which were in much greater number, the children of parents in easy circumstances were admitted, but not exclusively. They were taught reading in the vernacular tongue, writing, the necessary information on commerce and science, geography, drawing, agriculture, the construction of maps, navigation, and the accomplishments of social life. The house of La Rossignolerie is now occupied by the royal college of Angers. Of this second class, Marseilles had one, which, in 1792, contained sixteen pupils; St. Omers, eighty; Montpellier, ninety; Mirepoix, thirty; and Martinique, one hundred. Brother Agathon exerted himself to get rid of the first kind; he thought them foreign to the spirit and destructive to the discipline of the Institute; he therefore redoubled his efforts with the government to free himself of the burden. The desire of attaining this object, induced him to solicit pressingly the unfortunate Lewis XVI, in private interviews, and in different memorials, addressed to his ministers; but all his efforts proved unsuccessful. That monarch held the Institute in

great esteem ; he knew the merit of the superior-general, whom he honoured with his friendship : the motives which seemed calculated in appearance to obtain this favour, were precisely what induced Lewis to deny the request. In his wisdom he judged, that he could not leave in more secure hands, the interests and the morals of many members connected with families distinguished for their nobility and opulence. These two species of boarding establishments were kept by the Brothers, up to their dispersion in 1792.

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#### CHAP. XIV.

WHILE the zealous superior laboured assiduously to advance the Institute which he governed, the tempest excited in France by impiety against the altar and the throne, assumed a consistency, increased, and menaced the Gallican Church with the most frightful horrors. This tempest quickly burst, and overturned those ancient episcopal sees, established by the apostles of that country almost at the birth of Christianity, and those celebrated abbeys, which were founded or rendered illustrious by so many holy personages, and which were as ancient as monarchy. Religious institutions the most unobtrusive and useful, were not spared, nor the splendid monuments of the faith and piety of that nation. The impious wretches who

sought to annihilate Christianity in France, deemed it necessary first to destroy the means by which it was upheld. The national assembly prohibiting, by its decree of the 29th October, 1789, vows to be made in communities, gave the religious orders a fatal blow ; it consummated its work on the 13th February, 1790, by the suppression of all religious societies. With lively sorrow Brother Agathon saw these tyrannical measures taken against religious bodies. To save his Institute from the general proscription, he drew up an apologetic memorial, which he got printed and distributed among members of the assembly. The solidity of the reasons which he set forth in it, made an impression on the moderate deputies ; one of them highly eulogised the Brothers. Yet the language of truth had little weight with men who listened only to the voice of passion ; the arguments were assailed by many, and the assembly adhered to its decree.

In this awful conjuncture, Brother Agathon seeing that all hopes of preserving the Institute were lost, addressed to all the Brothers a circular letter, by which he gave them, though with reluctance and regret, the liberty of retiring wherever they wished, until more favourable circumstances would permit him to recal them ; he recommended to them an inviolable obedience to the legitimate pastors, and a particular attention to preserve untarnished, in the midst of a contagious world to which they were returning, the virtues which they had acquired in religion. Thus was dispersed a religious body, which, for more than a century, had rendered important services to the more humble classes of society. In the last thirty years preceding the revolution, the body had attained a very high degree of prosperity. It had one hundred and twenty-one houses, occupied by one thousand subjects, the greater

part of whom distinguished themselves by the uniform practice of religious virtues, and by all the talents becoming their profession.

The national assembly, on suppressing the religious orders in France, had, by its decree of the 19th February, 1790, granted a modified pension to the professed members, as a compensation for the loss of their property : this pension became the cause of persecutions as violent as they were unjust. These enemies of religion had engendered a hideous monster, named the "*Civil Constitution of the Clergy* ;" they had sufficient influence to obtain its adoption by a decree as a fundamental law of the Gallican Church ; and shortly after, setting no bounds to their audacity, they required of all priests and pensioned religious an oath to maintain this constitution. At this proposal the clergy of France evinced a just horror, and rejected, with indignation, the work of darkness. The bishops condemned it as schismatical, nay, heretical ; the Holy See denounced anathemas against it ; all the ecclesiastics and religious who had preserved the faith, courageously refused the impious oath ; it was taken by a few lax apostates only. This noble and holy resistance was the signal for persecution. The faithful priests were pursued with fury ; the bishops were torn from their sees ; the flocks lost their pastors, and became a prey to constitutional intruders. At all times, the Brothers were distinguished for their spirit of submission to the Church ; it was warmly recommended to them by their holy founder ; they now shared in the persecution of the French clergy, and were found worthy to suffer for Catholic unity. On refusing to take the oath, they were driven from their houses ; and thus their dispersion was completed at the commencement of the year 1791.

At this period, Brother Agathon quitted his residence in Melun, the chief house of the Institute since 1778, when he purchased it from Cardinal de Luynes, archbishop of Sens. The afflicted superior came to Paris, to provide for his safety, to give advice and consolation to his brethren. He was accompanied by Brother Solomon, his secretary, who was useful to him for the care which he took of his health, now worn down by age, anxieties, and fatigues. This Brother's assiduity and charity were shortly after rewarded by a glorious martyrdom. At their arrival in Paris, they went to lodge at a house in the street of Notre-Dame-des-Champs, then occupied by the Brothers of St. Sulpice, who held the parish schools. These Brothers were obliged by pressing circumstances to quit it: they left behind them the two fugitives, who came to the resolution of dwelling there, that they might not burden nor implicate their friends. The flame of persecution enkindling more and more, the situation of the two Brothers became more perilous; they feared to attract the attention of ill-intentioned neighbours or of fiery revolutionists, who sought to multiply the victims of their despotism. Brother Agathon and his companion were obliged to use great caution in going out and coming in, as the house was believed to be untenanted. They soothed by their close union and society the rigours of their situation. The moment of sacrifice arrived. Brother Solomon, by some unknown incident, was separated from his superior, and was arrested in the month of February, 1792, and conducted to the convent of the Discalced Carmelites, then transformed into a prison. After an imprisonment of eight months, he had the glory of mingling his blood with that of three illustrious French prelates, and of many faithful priests, who were massacred in this house, on the 2nd and

3rd of September, 1792, by wretches excited thereto by the leaders of impiety.\*

Brother Solomon was not the only member of the Institute confined in this prison; Brother Abraham had also been arrested in Paris and detained; but Providence permitted him to escape the massacre. Hidden in a corner of the church, close to a confessional, and delivered up to all the anguish of a most cruel agony, he awaited the fatal stroke. When he was discovered, a man dressed in the costume of the national guard, declared that he would answer for this Brother, assuring the assassins, that having been his neighbour near St. Sulpice, he had been witness of his conduct, which was irreproachable, and that he had kept a school up to the moment of his arrest.

Brother Abraham thus escaped a death which seemed inevitable, and died since in his own country, after having been afflicted with a mental disease, caused by the terror of that event. A grocer, in Paris, provided for his wants after his escape from prison. The death of Brother Solomon was shortly followed by that of three other Brothers. At this period, Brother Florence, who had resigned the office of superior in 1777, and had since been director of the house in Avignon, suffered a glorious persecution. He was frequently imprisoned, and dragged

\* This convent, celebrated in the annals of the French Church, is situate in the Rue de Vaugirard: it has been redeemed by Madame de Soyecourt, an ancient Carmelite nun, and is now inhabited by her community. Its church, remarkable for its elegance and beautiful dome, has been the first in the kingdom dedicated under the patronage of St. Joseph. The spots of blood from the martyred priests are still seen on the walls, and kissed with respect. An interior chapel, at the foot of the garden, preserves also similar traces; it is visited annually on the 2nd September, by numbers of the faithful.

bound like a criminal through the streets of that town, amid soldiers. So much ill treatment no doubt hastened his death. Some time after his last enlargement from prison, he ended his holy career at the age of seventy-five, on the 14th January, 1800. These Brothers may be considered as martyrs for their attachment to religion ; for their death was caused by the bad treatment they had received from the impious wretches who governed France at the revolution.

These monsters invented a new species of cruelty to destroy the clergy. Under pretence of banishing them to Guiana, they heaped them in great numbers on board two vessels, which lay in the harbour of Rochefort, and bore the respective names of "*The Washington*" and "*The Two Friends*." These confessors of the faith had to suffer the most painful privations in these floating prisons during the rigorous winter of 1794 ; the great majority of them fell victims. Three of the Brothers were on board, and died also.

Brother Agathon, the venerable superior-general, could not long escape the dangers by which he was surrounded. Many of his brethren retired into the three houses which had been formerly founded in Italy, and by which the Institute has been perpetuated. Animated with zeal for the glory of God, and with the desire of discharging their humble functions, these worthy children of M. de la Salle resolved to establish in that hospitable country gratuitous schools. With this intention they wrote to Brother Agathon for his consent, which they easily obtained. Thus, shortly after, a house was founded at Orvietto. Other Brothers having also written to the superior for advice, one of these letters was intercepted by the revolutionary authorities. It was sufficient to render

that Brother suspected ; he was arrested and imprisoned, as guilty of correspondence with the emigrants. The first prison of this Brother was that of St. Pelagius, where he was easy of access. He was associated with all classes of prisoners, even with comedians, who were incarcerated for their opinions. Subsequently, he was transferred to Bicêtre, and placed apart ; thence, successively, to the palace of the Luxembourg, and the Conciergerie ; and on one occasion was even led out to execution.

Providence placed a limit at length to the excesses of those miscreants, who clothed France with mourning. Robespierre, their chieftain, was overthrown ; he perished on the scaffold with many of his accomplices, on the 27th July, 1794. Proscriptions ceased, prisons were opened, and faithful priests only were exposed to persecution ; the other classes of society were allowed some repose. At this period, Brother Agathon regained his liberty. In the name of the convention, he was enlarged by the deputy Bourdon, who, after having addressed him a few kind words, delivered him an order to quit Paris within twenty-four hours. The venerable superior sought a lodging in the house of one of his Brothers, who, having yielded to the storm, had not been disturbed : on the next day, after a captivity of eighteen months, he withdrew from the capital to Tours, where he terminated his holy career, after an illness of fifteen days, on the 15th September, 1797. The persecutions at that time being somewhat abated, he had the happiness of receiving at his last moments the sacraments of the Church. He was in the sixty-sixth year of his age, and had governed the Institute twenty years.

The Brothers of Italy, seeing how difficult and dangerous it was to have an intercourse with their superior,

solicited Pope Pius VI to appoint for them a vicar-general. He freely granted them this favour, and nominated to that office Brother Frumentius, then director of the house of St. Saviour's, in Rome. The new vicar governed the four houses with the approbation of all the Brothers, and even of the superior-general, who wrote to him many times after having regained his liberty. The peace enjoyed by the Institute in this strange land was disturbed by the entry of the French into Italy, in 1798. They took with them to that country the revolutionary system, and suppressed the religious orders. The two houses in Rome sunk in the common fate, and the Brothers who occupied them, were obliged to fly. Some of them retired to France, some to Orvietto, and more remained in Rome, in secular clothes, giving lessons in writing and arithmetic. This second dispersion was a new misfortune to the society, now menaced with complete destruction ; for in 1799, there remained of an Institute, once so flourishing, only the two houses of Ferrara and of Orvietto, composed of about fifteen Brothers.

Buonaparte, after the battle of Marengo, in 1800, having become master of Italy, manifested favourable dispositions towards religion. The Brothers received permission to reopen their two houses in Rome. Shortly after, the *Concordat* concluded between the Holy See and the French government, signed by Pope Pius VII, on the 15th of August, 1801, gave peace to the Church of France, and afforded it leisure to repair the evils which it had suffered during twelve years of a horrible persecution. Profiting of this first calm moment, the Brothers hastened to offer again their disinterested services to the poor children. Lyons was the first city in which the children enjoyed the blessings of a Christian and gratuitous education. Bro-

ther Francis of Jesus, formerly master of novices, fixed his residence in that city, after the dispersion of the society. On the 25th of February, 1802, at the request of the Abbé Girard, then vicar-general of Lyons, Brother Francis wrote to Brother Pigmenion, who kept a school at Condrien, in the same diocese, to unite with him in opening gratuitous schools, under the protection of the ecclesiastical superiors, and with the consent of the civil authorities. Brother Pigmenion hastened to accept an invitation which agreed so well with his desires.

The first care of the Brothers was to seek a convenient residence and schoolhouse. They wrote to several Brothers, and proposed a union; the latter not being able to ascertain the stability of the new establishment, preferred to remain where they had founded flourishing schools. Brother Francis of Jesus, afflicted at their refusal, offered to teach a school, though in his seventy-ninth year. God, satisfied with his good desires, called him to eternal rest on the Good Friday following, before he could put his hand to the work. The death of this venerable Brother threw his companion into great embarrassment; however, full of confidence in God, he adored the decrees of Heaven, and redoubled his efforts to procure a new Brother for opening the school without delay. His exertions had not the desired effect; he determined to undertake alone the good work to which he had been called. The 3rd of May, the Invention of the Holy Cross, was the day fixed for the admission of the children. This day having arrived, and the scholars being assembled in the room destined for their reception, the Abbé Girard celebrated Mass there, to obtain the light of the Holy Ghost, and to draw the benediction of Heaven on the pious undertaking. The Brother received the holy communion, and joined his fervent prayers with those of God's ministers.

The number of scholars daily increased ; the labour became too great for a single master. Providence came to his aid, by inspiring a young man of Lyons, with the desire of sharing his labours. This young man was received, and a second school was opened. In some time after, many Brothers joined them. This union enabled them to open new schools ; the establishment assumed a satisfactory form : but a more extensive school than that which they occupied became necessary—an accommodation which was readily granted to them by the magistrates of Lyons, who showed for this good work a zeal truly admirable, by giving to the community the ancient college of the Jesuits. While Brother Pigmenion assembled with so much difficulty the Brothers who were to form the establishment of Lyons, other members of the Institute united in community at St. Germain-en-Laye, at Toulouse, and at Gros-Caillou, in Paris. But these houses had no connexion, no tie between them : they were disjointed members, without a common head. These communities very shortly became flourishing by the favour of government, in authorising towns to permit the opening of schools, and by obliging the managers of hospitals to furnish the moderate expenses which these schools required.

## CHAP. XV.

THE Brothers being dispersed through all France, could not assemble to appoint a successor to Brother Agathon, who, as we have seen, died at Tours, in 1797. Brother Frumentius, it is true, had been named by Pope Pius VI, vicar-general of the Institute. Pope Pius VII, successor to that great Pontiff, had confirmed him in that office ; he was in Italy, and consequently too remote to be useful. It was believed then, that the most prudent measure would be to solicit his return into France, to take the administration of the rising Institute, which then had attracted the attention and benevolence of the government. The better to succeed in this affair, the Brother interested the French minister in Rome. The minister spoke in their favour to the Holy Father, and Brother Frumentius, and three other Brothers, set off from Rome, on the 31st of October, 1804. They arrived at Lyons on the 9th of November.

It would be difficult to describe the joy caused by the arrival of Brother Frumentius. The Brothers who composed the community, hastened to assure him of their obedience; and those of other establishments wrote to him, expressing the same sentiments. A project for the approbation of government, was presented at this period, and favourably received. The news became known to many of the Brothers ; they determined to place themselves under the direction of Brother Frumentius, who received them with paternal kindness.

Up to this moment, the Brothers dared not to wear their habit in public; they had been deprived of it by the revolution. The anxious desires they felt of appearing in the livery of their pious founder, and the protection granted to them having gradually dissipated their fears, they resumed their holy habit on the 8th September, 1805, being the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, for whom their venerable founder had inspired them with a particular devotion. The friends of religion were edified and consoled to see, on the next day, the Brothers walking through the streets of Lyons, in a dress which appeared quite new, as the Institute was not known in that city before the revolution.

The schools of Lyons being sufficiently supplied with Brothers, and many towns having signified to Brother Frumentius their desire of obtaining subjects, he hastened to comply with their wishes. The first formed establishments were those of Ajaccio in Corsica, St. Stephen's in Forrez, and Trevoux of Besançon. These houses were founded in 1805. At the same time the ancient Brothers, who knew nothing of what was passing at Lyons, united together in many towns and cities at the request of the authorities. When they had learned the re-establishment of the Institute, they made with joy their submission to Brother Frumentius, the vicar-general. It was by this name he was designated during his administration. He received them kindly, and confirmed them in their employments.

The Institute continued to propagate by the aid of many ancient Brothers, who came from all parts to Lyons, to receive the orders of the Brother-vicar, and by a good number of novices, who were formed in the different novitiates recently established, but particularly in that of

Lyons, which became very flourishing. One of the causes which contributed chiefly to procure this great number of novices, was the privilege which the Institute obtained of exemption from military service in favour of those young persons who would consecrate themselves to this pious Institute. This favour was granted through the mediation of the archbishop of Lyons, who, on all occasions, gave proofs of a sincere attachment to the Christian Schools. At the organisation of the university, in 1808, the Institute acquired a greater stability ; it was then legally recognised ; the decree, dated the 17th March, spoke of it in the most flattering terms.

Shortly after this happy commencement, the Lord, to reward the zeal and devotedness which the Brother vicar had manifested for the re-establishment of the Institute, withdrew him from this place of exile. On his return to France, his infirmities greatly increased, as he had anticipated on his departure from Rome. He died peaceably, aged sixty-three years, at four in the morning, on the 27th January, 1810, at the moment when the Brother who attended him, came to give him what he asked. He was in office from 1794. The abundance of tears shed by all the Brothers at the news of his death, was an unequivocal proof of the tender love which they bore him ; a love which he merited by his eminent virtues, and by the mildness and wisdom of his administration.

The general chapter for the election of a successor, was fixed for the following September ; it was held on the 8th of that month, in the house of the little college at Lyons. It was composed, conformably to the rule, of thirty Brothers, deputies from the body : fifteen were directors of principal houses, and fifteen were ancient Brothers. After the accustomed prayers, the votes of all were in

favour of Brother Gerbaud, director of a house in Paris. The eminent virtues with which he was adorned, his zeal and wisdom in the midst of trials and incessant storms, during the fifteen years of his administration, visibly proved that the Holy Ghost had presided at his election. There were then about thirty-six houses.

Brother Gerbaud's first care was to ascertain personally the state of each establishment; to accomplish this, he undertook a general visit as soon as time permitted. It would be difficult to describe what he had to suffer on long and perilous journeys, which he almost invariably performed on foot. He traversed France many times with great fatigues and dangers. Often on his return from long journeys, without claiming half a day's repose, he was obliged to spend a part of the night in replying to the letters that he received from the Brothers. This labour increased as the Institute extended. In a short time he attained a high esteem among the Brothers, and all those with whom he had an intercourse. His piety, mildness, charity, mortification, and humility, cannot be described.

At the happy epoch of the restoration in France, Brother Gerbaud ordered prayers to be offered for the king, not only by the Brothers, then amounting to three hundred and eighty, in fifty-five houses, but also by eighteen thousand children, whom he endeavoured to make good subjects, by making them good Christians. By his directions the *Domine, salvum fac Regem*, resounded through all the Christian Schools in France, on the 6th April, 1814.

The anxieties and labours inseparable from every administration were not solely what he had to bear in the exercise of his charge. His solicitudes increased, particularly during the last years of Buonaparte's reign. At each levy of conscripts, now made in advance to

recruit the numerous losses of the French armies, numbers of young Brothers were claimed, whether they were exempt in the society or had satisfied the law before their admission. It became necessary to have many interviews with the prefects and ministers, to obtain a new exemption. Again, some of these young men, who had no other vocation than the desire of screening themselves from the law of conscription, wearied his patience by irregularity of conduct; however, it cost him dearly to exclude them from the Institute, when it came to that extremity. His profound humility persuaded him that he had not the qualifications necessary for his situation. Under this conviction he convoked a general chapter at Lyons, in September, 1816, and tendered his resignation. He flattered himself that his reasons would appear sufficiently cogent to the assembly; thus, satisfied with having forcibly explained them in his letter of resignation, he withdrew from the assembly to allow liberty of discussion, persuaded that it would have the desired effect. But, to his great surprise, he found that all the votes were in his favour. In vain did he exaggerate his incapacity and his unworthiness: the chapter paid no attention to his remonstrances; he was obliged to resume the burden.

When the Institute became possessed, in 1819, of the establishment in Faubourg St. Martin, Paris, by the liberality of Louis XVIII, Brother Gerbaud formed the project of transferring to it his residence from Lyons, where he and his predecessors lived since that city had served as a second cradle to the Institute. He was induced to this by the desire of approaching the centre of business, and of having more facility in his communications with the government. This project was effected in January, 1821.

The Institute increased daily. With unfeigned pleasure the Brothers saw their superior enjoy perfect health, which his residence in Paris seemed to improve. They flattered themselves with the pleasing hope of possessing him yet a long time, when he was suddenly attacked with a fit of apoplexy, on the 12th of July, 1822. The grief through the Institute was excessive at this sad intelligence; the Brothers addressed their most ardent prayers for the preservation of their father. The moment was come when God was to terminate his labours, and reward them in heaven. He died on the 10th of August, at the age of sixty-two years. The Institute possessed but thirty-six houses and two hundred and fifty subjects when he was appointed superior-general; at his death they amounted to one hundred and eighty houses, and twelve hundred subjects.

On the 11th of November, 1822, the assembled chapter in Paris elected as superior, Brother William of Jesus. The four houses which had been established in Belgium, were suppressed in 1825, by an ordinance from the king of Holland. Every friend to religion and liberty beheld with indignation the execution of this measure, and the many other acts of oppression which since brought on the successful revolution in that country. Pope Leo XII, in 1828, took four Brothers from France to Rome, and purchased for them a beautiful and extensive residence. They studied Italian closely for a few weeks, and then opened schools. Under the administration of Brother William, the Institute continued to extend, to enjoy the benedictions of Heaven, the protection of the state, and the affection and confidence of the virtuous. Brother William closed his mortal career on the 10th of June, 1830, as if God wished to spare him the anguish of wit-

nessing the misfortunes which were in a few days to desolate his country.

How deeply and deservedly he was lamented by his Brothers, may be inferred from the tender manner in which they cherish his memory. Having entered the Institute when very young, he brought to it the innocence of childhood—his soul knew no evil. He had the happiness to pass his first years in religion under the guidance of a venerable old man, who had lived from the time of M. de la Salle—thus he was in some measure coeval with the infancy of the Institute, and partook of its primitive fervour. What edifying examples did he not witness in his early years, when he attended the school of the Brothers in his native town, or when he became a member of the Institute? Those anecdotes which he loved to relate, evinced his love of holy poverty, his spirit of universal mortification, an exact regularity, and, above all, his most perfect obedience. These are the virtues which formed, during his lifetime, the distinctive character of this worthy superior. He was eighty-two years, four months, and ten days of age, sixty-seven years of which he passed in the society, and fifty-seven professed.

## CHAP. XVI.

AT the general chapter held in September, 1830, Brother Anacletus, the third assistant, was elected superior.

In a few days after the death of the venerable patriarch, William of Jesus, the evil spirit which had existed in France, was manifested in consequence of some ordinances of Charles X. The friends of infidelity anxiously desired to promote the *Ecoles Mutuelles*, to the prejudice of the Christian Schools : they complained that the system of the Brothers was rather tedious, because a portion of the school-hours was devoted to religious instruction.

Notwithstanding the great increase of the Institute, it must have been much injured by this revolution ; the Brothers apprehended then that the greater part of their establishments would be suppressed ; and some were shortly afterwards ; but the majority of them have since been re-established : other houses suffered by a reduction of their funds. In 1833, a law was enacted regarding primary instruction, which has since served as a pretext for many petty persecutions on the part of some of the local authorities.

We have as yet put forward a part only of the services rendered by the Brothers ; we have seen them only in connexion with children ; in their conscientious solicitude there remained an additional duty towards society. They knew that numbers of the adult population had scarcely a tincture of religious education ; the Brothers, therefore,

resolved to supply this want, and happily found the government favourable to the project.

The schools for adults are held in the evenings : numbers of every age and condition assemble ; fathers of families, after a hard day's labour, sit on the benches which had been occupied by their children during the day, receive with docility the instruction not given them in early years, and learn the prayers that they had forgotten, or that they had the misfortune of never having known. Many such schools for adults have been founded, not only in Paris, but through the provinces : those in Paris deserve a more particular notice. In that city there are thirty classes, affording instruction to two thousand one hundred and eighty-four operatives, from seventeen to forty years of age, besides apprentices, who cannot be admitted with the operatives from eight to ten at night, but are attended to from five to seven, after the dismissal of the children in the evening.

After so many happy results obtained from these schools for adults, it was found that the Brothers were too few in number to attend the day and evening classes. If the increase of labour was not too much for their zeal, it was found above their physical strength. To remedy this deficiency of numbers, the Brothers proposed the best, perhaps the only means—that of creating a preparatory novitiate, where youths of fourteen or fifteen years of age, called to a work of such merit, might come to acquire the necessary information, to prove their vocation, and form themselves to virtue. This project was commenced ; and as the Brothers were willing to make any sacrifice when the cause of religion and the good of society were in question, they bore for more than a year the expense of sixty youths, whom they had the happiness of uniting to

themselves, and who are now their hope and consolation. They erected, at their parent-house in Paris, a new suit of rooms without any public aid. Their confidence in the Divine bounty sustained their efforts.

Charitable individuals, who had a knowledge of what had been done, and of what yet remained to be done, suggested to the Brothers to make an appeal to all the real friends of the people, in order to complete a work so full of future good; a work in which the whole of society is interested, since it is destined to pay a most sacred debt towards the poorer classes, in removing ignorance, and above all, by supplying religious instruction. For this purpose, the undenamed respectable individuals united together, in the hope that others might co-operate with them, and that a subscription might be opened to provide funds for this preparatory novitiate, which is also the Normal School of the Brothers. This work was not for Paris alone; it was for all France. Committee in Paris:— Abbé de Dreux Brézé, President and Grand-Vicar of Paris; Abbé Daure, Vice-President; M. P. Rusand, Secretary; M. Choiselat, Treasurer; Count de Chabrol Volvic, Count Henri de Harcourt, Chevalier de la Garde, Count Tascher, Marquis de Vogué, &c.

An appeal which they made through their committee in its behalf was generously responded to by a people who revered and loved them, as being wholly devoted to promote their happiness, and actuated only by the most disinterested motives.

The following is an extract from the yearly report given by the Committee at a general meeting, 7th March, 1838:—

“The committee feel it a duty they owe to the benefactors of this work to lay before them the results obtained

during the year 1837. To animate their zeal, and procure new subscribers, it would be easy to prove, with the simplicity that should characterise all that has reference to these modest and useful men, how urgent and indispensable is the formation of a novitiate of this nature, and how important to be preserved. That primary instruction is a necessity of our age, cannot be denied ; that which the children of the people receive from the Brothers, has been tested and appreciated : their complete success, the excellence of their system, their unassuming meekness, and the attachment with which they inspire their pupils, are universally admitted ; but it is well known, that they are too few to meet the many applications made for their services. Must they be obliged, continually, to give painful refusals to these pressing invitations, and give up all the good that may be done ? It is well known that no resource remained but to establish a nursery of young instructors, who would be trained to the same rules, and to the same system of instruction, and then sent successively through the country to uphold the existing schools by filling up the vacancies caused by death or infirmity, or to found new establishments.

“ The first trials have realised our hopes ; more candidates have presented themselves than the funds could admit ; during this first year a hundred and twenty-five have been received to the preparatory novitiate ; out of these, twenty-three, not being suitable for such laborious functions, or not having a decided vocation, have been sent back to their parents ; twenty-four entered the large novitiate, fourteen of whom have been sent to teach schools, seventy-eight continue still their studies, and conduct themselves in the most exemplary manner.

“ If, thus, the utility of forming a novitiate remains

proved to all enlightened and candid men, it is necessary to provide for its support, and even for its extension. It suffices to know the state of the Institute, to appreciate fully the services which this novitiate is capable of rendering. The communes, which are fully provided with Brothers, wish to keep the number; fifty towns that have Brothers already, ask for more; a hundred and twenty large towns, that have none, are pressing for them: eight hundred Brothers, at least, could be immediately employed. The consequence is easily drawn: without a novitiate what would become of these numerous establishments; what hope would remain to the applicants? The support, the extension of the novitiate, is then a duty of the communes and of the individuals who love the Brothers, and have adopted them, and of those who wish to have them.

“ This is not a work bounded within the narrow limits of a province or a diocese; it is to all France we make our appeal. The more shall the central committee of Paris number of other committees corresponding and associated with it, the more certain will be the success. It is not one of those ordinary charities, the fruit of which may be uncertain, by relieving a particular class or individual misery; here the general interest of society is concerned, here the sacrifice shall be rich in the results: reason, and the best feelings of the human heart, give it their approval.

“ Signed.”

The Institute extended considerably under Brother Anaclet, who died in September, 1838. On the 21st November, of the same year, Brother Philip was elected superior. His great zeal, his talents and enlightened

mind, promise favourably for the Institute. He has kindly furnished the following particulars :—

STATE OF THE INSTITUTE, 10th NOVEMBER, 1842,

| <i>Localities<br/>of the<br/>Establishments.</i> | <i>Establishments.</i> | <i>Brothers.</i> | <i>Novices.</i> | <i>Schools.</i> | <i>Children.</i> | <i>Adults.</i> | <i>Total number of<br/>Scholars.</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| France, {                                        | Paris, 11              | 229              | 116             | 33              | 11,234           | 2,184          | 13,418                               |
| Lyons, 5                                         | 125                    | 90               | 21              |                 | 5,708            | 200            | 5,908                                |
| Provinces, 307                                   | 2177                   | 245              | 496             | 124,814         | 2,659            | 127,473        |                                      |
| Prisons, 3                                       | 42                     |                  |                 |                 | 1947             |                | 1,947                                |
| Total for France,                                | 326                    | 2573             | 451             | 550             | 141,756          | 6,990          | 148,746                              |
| Isle of Bourbon,                                 | 4                      | 14               |                 | 4               | 673              |                | 673                                  |
| Italy,                                           | 13                     | 96               | 18              | 15              | 3048             | 460            | 3508                                 |
| Piedmont,                                        | 11                     | 105              | 30              | 21              | 5612             |                | 5612                                 |
| Savoy,                                           | 14                     | 69               | 40              | 16              | 3280             |                | 3280                                 |
| Belgium,                                         | 17                     | 145              | 40              | 28              | 7228             | 350            | 7578                                 |
| Switzerland,                                     | 2                      | 8                |                 | 3               | 420              |                | 420                                  |
| Canada,                                          | 1                      | 11               | 6               | 3               | 1013             |                | 1013                                 |
| Greece,                                          | 2                      | 9                |                 | 2               | 670              |                | 670                                  |
| General Total,                                   | 390                    | 3030             | 585             | 642             | 163,700          | 7,800          | 171,500                              |

In glancing over the annals of this Institute for the last half century, we find that the chasm caused by its suppression in 1792, was soon felt in France. The general assemblies of many departments solicited, in 1801, the re-establishment of the schools, and that primary instruction should be entrusted to the Brothers. The government, taking the wishes of the assemblies into consideration, commissioned the general inspectors in 1802, to ascertain the wants of the communes ; the schools were soon after restored. Napoleon wishing to lay the basis of Primary Instruction, issued on the 17th March, 1808, a decree by which he recalled the Christian Brothers : they were to be encouraged by the Grand

Master of the University ; funds were allocated for several new novitiates ; the novices were exempted from the conscription ; and the communes were authorised to grant funds for the support of the schools. In the instructions given in 1812 and '13, by Napoleon, to the rectors of the Academy, he recommended that the Brothers should be preferred to all other candidates.

The system of popular instruction in use at the time of Ven. De la Salle not being adapted to large schools, in which many pupils may be instructed together, he invented the *Simultaneous System*, which has since been adopted by a great many educational founders. He may be considered as the father of Primary Instruction in France, and one of the greatest benefactors of mankind, having bestowed on them one of the noblest Institutions of human genius. From time to time, his disciples have introduced improvements into their system of instruction, as the advance of society may require, or the progress of arts, science, and literature, may suggest. The works which they have published on Grammar, Geography, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Drawing, deservedly rank as the best elementary treatises published on these subjects, and have been recently adopted as standard school-books by the Royal Counsel of Public Instruction.

## CHAP. XVII.

IN 1802, Mr. Edmond Rice, of Waterford, commenced an establishment in that city for the gratuitous instruction of youth in literature and Christian piety. He was joined in this undertaking by two young men, desirous of devoting their lives to the same laudable purpose. On the 7th of June, 1803, they came to reside in the new dwelling-house, but the schools were not finished until the close of the same year. The building was commenced in the episcopacy of the Right Rev. Dr. Thomas Hussey, then bishop of Waterford, who highly approved of Mr. Rice's intention, and liberally contributed to the good work. This excellent and learned prelate died at Dunmore, the 11th of July, 1803, and was succeeded by the Right Rev. Dr. John Power, a sincere and active friend to the rising Institute. On the 26th of January, 1816, this zealous supporter of every good work closed his mortal career.

The schools were opened for the reception of children the 1st of May, 1804. Mr. Rice and his two companions were joined about this time by another young man. The good effects of their instructions soon became manifest in the conduct of the children; a circumstance which speedily attracted public notice, and augmented the number of scholars. Mr. Rice and his associates adopted, as nearly as circumstances would admit, the rules and constitutions of the Presentation nuns. In

1806, Mr. Thomas O'Brien, wine merchant, of Waterford, seeing the good which resulted to the children from these schools, commenced, with the approbation of the Right Rev. Dr. Power, a similar establishment in Carrick-on-Suir : it was finished in 1807. Towards the close of that year, another foundation was made in Dungarvan. At the beginning of 1808, there were five members in the Waterford house ; two in Carrick, besides Mr. O'Brien ; and two in Dungarvan : in all *nine*. About this time they came to the resolution of making annual vows. On August the 15th, of that year, seven members, at the close of an eight-days' retreat, pronounced these vows in the presence of Dr. Power, according to a form drawn up by his Lordship.

It was the intention of this society to submit their rules to the Holy See, and pray for their confirmation. The Institute now began to assume a regular form ; subjects offered, and prospects began to appear for its farther extension. The Right Rev. Dr. Power wrote to the Propaganda, giving a statement of the origin and object of the society, and praying for an approval of what had been done. In answer to his lordship's letter, Cardinal de Pietro wrote, commending the good work, and suggesting to have the rules and constitutions laid in form before his Holiness Pope Pius VII ; but, from various causes, they were never sent forward.

The Right Rev. Dr. Moylan, bishop of Cork, sent two young men to serve their novitiate in Waterford. They arrived on St. Patrick's day, 1810, and remained until November, 1811, then returned home, and commenced the labours of the society with much effect. Another young man came also from that city in June, 1811, and returned in October, 1812. Dr. Moylan was a zealous

friend to the Institute, and may be justly called the founder of the Ursuline and Presentation nuns in this country.

In May, 1812, two Brothers were sent from Waterford to form an establishment in Hanover-street, East, in Dublin, under the patronage of the Most Rev. Dr. Murray, who zealously promoted the interests of the society in that city. Two Brothers were sent from Hanover-street to Mill-street, Dublin, in 1813, at the solicitation of the Very Rev. Dr. Hamill, V. G., and then parish priest of that once flourishing, but now decayed part of the city. Two subjects were sent in February, 1815, from Thurles to Waterford, by the Most Rev. Dr. Bray, then archbishop of Cashel, to serve their novitiate. On the 25th of June, 1816, three members were sent from Waterford to Limerick, at the request of the Right Rev. Dr. Tuohy, bishop of that diocess, to form there an establishment; and subsequently, other establishments were formed in different parts of Ireland and England.

The schools in Waterford were now found inadequate to accommodate all the children who sought admission. Additional schools were commenced; the Right Rev. Dr. Power and the benevolent citizens contributed generously to the building, which was finished in 1816.

It has been already observed, that the Brothers adopted, as nearly as circumstances would permit, the rules of the Presentation nuns. After some time, when the number of houses increased, it was found that several inconveniences arose from the Presentation form of government. These inconveniences were seen and felt by some of the episcopal friends of the Institute; but no measures were taken to remove them until August, 1817. The Most Rev. Dr. Murray having gone to France in 1816,

on affairs connected with the Irish college in Paris, became acquainted with the Brothers of the Christian Schools of that country, and found that their Institute had been confirmed, and that the society was governed by a superior-general. This apostolic prelate, on his arrival in Dublin, in January, 1817, submitted to the Brothers there the rules and constitutions of the French Institute, together with the Apostolic Brief, by which it was confirmed, a copy of which was sent to every house of the society. The majority of the Brothers were pleased with the system of government, and became convinced that such a system only could, under divine Providence, give general satisfaction to the Brothers, and stability to their society. The members of the different houses communicated their thoughts to each other on the subject, and it was agreed that a meeting should take place at Waterford. It was convened on the 19th of August, 1817, and after much discussion and deliberation, they came to the resolution of embracing the mode of government specified in the French Brief, and extracted from it such articles as were suited to the circumstances of this country. The chapter was dissolved on the 26th of the same month.

These articles were transmitted to Rome, together with a memorial from the Brothers, recommended by the Most Rev. Dr. Troy, the Most Rev. Dr. Murray, and other prelates, praying the Holy See to grant the petition of the memorial. On the 5th of February, 1820, the Brief commencing "*Ad Pastoralis dignitatis fastigium,*" confirming these articles, and the Institute itself, was issued by his Holiness Pope Pius VII. However, for want of a safe conveyance, the Brief did not reach Ireland until the spring of 1821. The late Dr. Peter Kenny, S. J., was the bearer of this important document. Here it may

be observed, that this society being governed by its own elected superior, has no dependance on the society in France; their only connexion is that emanating from Christian charity, and their being kindred institutions.

As soon as it was announced to the Brothers that the Brief had arrived, they were anxious to adopt measures for receiving it in due form. For this purpose the Brothers, nineteen in number, assembled in Thurles, on the 25th of August, the same year. The Brief was read and adopted ; three Brothers only dissented. Votes of cordial thanks were passed to those prelates who had patronised the Institute in their respective diocesses ; and it was decided that a meeting should be held in Waterford, on the 12th of January, 1822, to pronounce their vows according to the new constitutions.

The Brothers assembled at Mount Sion, Waterford, on Friday evening, January the 11th. They entered on a retreat, which was conducted with great effect by the Very Rev. Dr. Kenny, who went from Dublin for that purpose. It terminated on Friday evening, January 19th ; and next morning, the 20th, being the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, Mass was celebrated at half-past seven o'clock, in the domestic chapel of the Waterford house, by Dr. Kenny, at which the Brothers communicated. Shortly after Mass the Brothers re-assembled, and having sung the Hymn "*Veni, Creator,*" they remained on their knees while one of the assembly read the Brief in an audible tone, and then, in presence of each other, with lighted tapers in their hands, they pronounced their vows, one by one, in succession.

After the superiors of the houses had thus made their vows, they then, agreeably to the Brief, formed the chapter, and proceeded to elect a superior-general. Mr.

Rice was elected to the office by a majority of suffrages. On Monday, January 21, the two assistants were elected. At this chapter it was decreed that the feasts of the Holy Name of Jesus and that of the Nativity of our Blessed Lady, should be the special feasts of the society ; and that the superior-general should make a visit of all the houses in the Institute. On Saturday evening, January 26, 1822, the chapter was dissolved.

On the following day the Brothers waited on the Very Rev. Dr. Kenny, and returned him thanks for his zeal and disinterested labours to promote the welfare of the Institute. He replied in the most feeling and energetic manner, reminding them, that as they were then after the holy exercises of the retreat, and pronouncing their vows, and as they were now recognised by the church as a religious body, they should live thenceforward in a manner becoming persons consecrated to the divine service. From these words of Holy Scripture, " In silence and in hope, there is my strength," he pointed out in the most forcible manner the line of conduct every Brother should pursue in his own station. He insisted that silence should be a favourite observance of a religious man ; and that hope and confidence in God's holy providence should be his anchor in all his difficulties. At the conclusion, the Brothers knelt down and received his benediction. Early on Monday morning they took leave of each other, and set off for their respective houses, to resume their labours among the poor children with increased zeal and fervour. Some of the Brothers who refused to conform to the Brief at that time, have since become united to the body.

In the Brief it was provided that a general chapter should be convoked every ten years ; that the superior-general

should govern for ten years only ; and that the directors or superiors of the houses, and the visitors for the time being, should form the chapter. In January, 1832, the chapter was accordingly convened at the house, North Richmond-street, Dublin. At this chapter Mr. Rice was re-elected superior-general, and it was decreed to memorial the Holy See that every superior-general should be elected for life, and that all future general chapters, thenceforward, should be composed of the superior-general and his two assistants, eight directors of principal houses, and eight ancient Brothers. This decree was confirmed by the Holy See in a rescript, dated August 25, 1833. In July, 1838, a chapter was held, at which Mr. Rice resigned his office of superior, finding its duties too weighty for his infirmities. Mr. M. P. Riordan, his successor, resides with his two assistants, Mr. P. J. Murphy, and Mr. T. J. Hearn, at Mount Sion, Waterford.

The Institute is composed of nineteen houses, having ninety school-Brothers, fifteen serving Brothers, fifty-eight schools, and about ten thousand children and adults under instruction. There are eleven of the houses situate in Ireland ; namely, in Dublin (three) ; Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Dungarvan, Carrick-on-Suir, Thurles, Ennistymon, and Claren Bridge, County Galway : seven in England—London (two) ; Manchester (two) ; Liverpool, Preston, and Sunderland ; and one in Sydney, to which three Brothers were sent with the Most Rev. Dr. Polding, at the express request of the Sacred Congregation. Several applications are being daily made from the colonies, America, and various parts of Great Britain and Ireland.

The knowledge communicated in the schools of this Institute embraces not only reading, writing, arithmetic,

grammar, geography, book-keeping, but also an acquaintance with such branches of mathematical science as are suited to the taste and talents of the pupils, and to the stations of life which they are destined to occupy. Geometry, mensuration, drawing, and mechanics, become special objects of attention. As to the manner of communicating knowledge, the most approved modern methods are sought out, and when found worthy of adoption, are carefully reduced to practice. Normal schools are established, in which the junior members, after having gone through a regular course of study, are trained, and thence sent to the other establishments of the Institute. Besides this, *all the members* are bound to occupy themselves for at least an hour and a-half every day in studies connected with the schools; and as this is done in community, they enjoy all the advantages of mutual assistance.

A detailed account of the manner in which each branch is taught in the schools would be tedious. It may, however, be remarked, that the ordinary reading lessons are made the means of communicating much useful information on every subject within the sphere of youthful intellect, as the *interrogatory system* is brought into full practical operation. Grammar, geography, and lessons on objects, are to a *certain extent* given *simultaneously*; but, as this method cannot be adopted without evident loss of time to many of the scholars, owing to the different degrees of talents and acquirements, care is taken that it should not interfere with monitorial or individual instruction. Regular lectures are given each day to the children, on the various subjects they are learning; and some of the more advanced scholars are trained to the delivery of such lectures. Thus the *three* methods of instruction, *simultaneous, mutual, and individual*, are daily brought into

operation in the Christian Schools. The mutual instruction is so arranged, that no monitor ordinarily teaches for more than one hour of the six which he attends school, and this, instead of interfering with his own progress, is a great means of facilitating it, as it gives him the advantages of repetition, a great facility in communicating his ideas, and business-like habits, which in after-life are of great advantage.

But it is to the communication of religious knowledge that this Institute is chiefly devoted. To this great object, the members direct their best energies. They look upon it as their principal concern: the one for which chiefly, under God, they have been called into existence; and though they are careful to impart a knowledge of everything that can tend to their pupils' temporal advancement, yet the knowledge of religion, and of the duties it inculcates, are the objects to which their minds and hearts are most particularly directed. For this purpose, prayer is said at the opening and close of the schools; the presence of God is recalled at the end of every hour; the catechism is repeated, and regular catechetical instruction given every day; stated times appointed for approaching the holy sacraments, for which, at particular seasons, the children undergo a long course of instruction. Each of the junior members of the Institute delivers in his turn a catechetical instruction in the presence of those who are older, that he may be regularly trained to the most perfect manner of discharging this important duty. The Brothers are required not to deliver any religious instruction without immediate preparation, and to be, as their rule inculcates, "vigilant, zealous, and laborious in their schools, and ever to exhibit to the children, in their own persons, a living example of those virtues which they

teach and exhort them to practise." On Sundays and holydays, and at other convenient times, the Brothers give religious instruction to adults.

This is a mere outline of *one* out of the many institutions which have risen in the bosom of the Catholic Church, and where countless generations have devoted their youth, their acquirements, their ease, and convenience, to promote the welfare of their fellow-beings. A Brother of the Christian Schools voluntarily makes sacrifices ; he consecrates himself to God in a profession wherein he renounces all the goods of the earth, the most legitimate enjoyments, his own will, and himself. He makes these sacrifices not to procure himself any temporal advantage ; the most pure and perfect disinterestedness guides his conduct. He devotes himself, not for a moment, but for life, to laborious, humbling, and uninviting duties. His great object is to be useful to the poor children of whom he has the care ; to form them to Christian and social virtues, to render them happy by his instruction, advice, and good example, without disgust at their rudeness, indocility, inaptitude, or the faults inseparable from their age ! He suggests to them the means of preserving themselves from the corruptions of the world ; of lessening the evils of life by the solid consolations found in religion ; and he does all this every day of his life with the most affectionate charity.

However, these labours are not without their consolations : it is cheering to him to find that he has conferred happiness on those whom he instructs ; that they become good Christians and valuable members of society ; and he entertains the humble hope, that, by acquiring saving knowledge, and imparting it to others, he will share in the rich reward which God has promised by the lips

of the prophet, (*Dan.* xii. 3): “*They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity.*”

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#### GENERAL CHAPTERS OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN FRANCE.

1. The first general chapter was held at St. Yon in 1694, at which M. de la Salle and twelve of his principal disciples pronounced perpetual vows of obedience and stability in the Institute.

2. On the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, May 1717, the second general assembly of the Brothers was convened at St. Yon, for the purpose of drawing up Rules and Constitutions for the Society, and electing a superior-general. M. de la Salle having resigned, Brother Bartholomew was elected in his stead.

3. The third was held August 7, 1720, for the election of a successor to Brother Bartholomew, who died the 8th of June the same year. Brother Timothy was elected by the unanimous suffrage of the assembly.

4. The fourth was held August 6, 1725, at St. Yon, for the reception of the Bull of Benedict XIII, by which the Institute was approved and confirmed. On the 15th, the Brothers one after another pronounced the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and gratuitous instruction, which were received by M. l'Abbé Robinet, who assisted in quality of commissary to his Holiness.

5. In July and August, 1734, on occasion of the translation of Venerable de la Salle's remains from the church of St. Severus to that of St. Yon, the fifth general chapter was held. The translation took place on the 16th July, and the consecration of the Brothers' new church the day following.

6. On the 30th May, 1745, the sixth general chapter was held at Rheims.

7. The seventh assembled at St. Yon, August 3, 1751, for the election of a superior-general in place of Brother Timothy, who resigned.

8. The eighth was convoked July 10, 1761, at St. Yon, by Brother Claude, the successor of Brother Timothy.

9. On the 18th of May, 1767, the ninth was held at St. Yon, at which Brother Claude, on account of his many infirmities, was permitted to resign, and Brother Florence was elected superior-general.

10. The tenth was held at Rheims, August 3, 1777. Notwithstanding the pressing instances of this chapter to induce him to remain in office, Brother Florence gave in his resignation. Brother Agathon was elected his successor.

11. The eleventh was held at Melun, May 4, 1787; at this chapter Brother Agathon sought earnestly, though without success, permission to resign.

12. On the 8th September, 1810, the twelfth general chapter was convened at Lyons. At this chapter Brother Gerbaud was elected superior. He was preceded in the government of the Institute by a vicar-general, Brother Frumentius, who died in January 1810, and who had been nominated to that office a short time after the decease of Brother Agathon in 1797.

13. The thirteenth was held at Lyons, the 8th September, 1816, at which Brother Gerbaud prayed leave to resign: his petition was rejected.

14. The fourteenth was held at Paris, in the house of the Holy Infant Jesus, November 11, 1822, for the election of a successor to Brother Gerbaud, who died August 10th, the preceding year. Brother William of Jesus was elected superior.

15. The 2d September, 1830, the fifteenth general chapter was held, at which Brother Anaclet was elected to succeed Brother William of Jesus, who had closed his earthly career on the 10th of June preceding.

16. November 21, 1838, two months after the pious death of Brother Anaclet, the *sixteenth and last general chapter* was held, in which Brother Philip was elected the *nineteenth superior-general*.

THE END.





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